



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

ORIGINAL TALES OF BUFFALO BILL'S ADVENTURES

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 3.

Price, Five Cents.

## BUFFALO BILL'S VICTORY

A STORY OF  
TANGLED TRAILS



BY THE AUTHOR OF  
'BUFFALO BILL'

AS THE WOMAN FEEL, BUFFALO BILL, WITH A TERRIBLE CRY, SPRANG FORWARD, AND THE VILLAIN HARKNESS WAS SENT REELING TO THE EARTH.





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The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. Wm. F. Cody ('BUFFALO BILL')

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## BUFFALO BILL'S VICTORY.

### A STORY OF TANGLED TRAILS.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

#### CHAPTER I.

##### TEXAS JACK STRIKES A TRAIL.

"Chief Cody, you will take an escort, a wagon-train of provisions, and forty horses, which the corral-master will deliver to you, and proceed with them to the camp of Spotted Tail, where you will deliver them, saying that these presents are from the Great Father at Washington to the chief, to show him that we are his friends, and to help him to go to the reservation set apart for him and his people. Impress on his mind that he must keep his young braves on the reservation, and that we, the soldiers of the Great Father at Washington, will see that no settlers shall occupy his lands, that no hunters shall disturb his game, and that no hostile tribes shall break the peace we declare. If bad men, white or red, go upon his territory, to make war, or deprive him of his rights, we will follow and punish them. These are your verbal orders—you will find them in this special written order from headquarters."

These words, spoken to Buffalo Bill by the gallant officer in command of the department near his prairie home, were listened to by the chief of scouts attentively, then, with a smile, he said:

"I'll be in the saddle in an hour, sir. But, if you please, hear a word about these reds. Old Spotted Tail is all right. He gave me his word when I did him the greatest favor of his life—saving his daughter from the hands of Yellow Bear. But Spotted Tail is old—he'll not live long, and there are sub-chiefs in his band who'll not keep his treaties."

"It may be so," said the officer. "But we have orders to obey, and have no responsibility beyond that. Those who order are responsible. I should have told you that one wagon is full of extra presents, blankets, and other things, to put the chief and his band in good humor."

"Thank you, colonel. May I ask a favor? I would like to take Texas Jack and my band of scouts with me, for when we return we can bring in a lot of game for the post."

"Certainly, Cody, and take your own time in returning after you have delivered the horses and provisions to Spotted Tail. In fact, I'd rather you'd scout over a large range of country, so as to know it better if we have, as I fear we will, yet to face a general Indian war. I have little faith in the Indians. You know when you will be wanted for the Yellowstone expedition—the time between now and then is your own."

"I thank you, colonel. I'll not abuse the liberty."

The brave scout saluted and turned away.

An hour later he was in the saddle, with a spare horse, trained to follow where he rode, and with stout-hearted Texas Jack and his band of hardy scouts following in his trail.

Buffalo Bill, as ever, well mounted, was now better armed than usual.

He joined the cavalry escort which waited the wagon-train near the gates of the fort, and, with the horses from the corral, moved off for the camp of the chief of the Big Horn Sioux.

"Rather a late start, but we'll reach water on Elmo



rate, the speaker's eyes had a searching look as he spoke.

"You've got what the Indians seem crazy after of late," said the younger stranger.

"What's that?" asked Harry Herbeson.

"Pretty women. They'll ride a thousand miles on the trail of such as them."

The fellow pointed to the girls, who drew back from his gaze.

"They will never get my sisters alive!" cried Marmion Herbeson.

"No!" echoed Harry. "We would defend them while living, and kill them ere we died rather than that they should fall into the hands of red or white miscreants."

And he looked fiercely at the younger stranger, who had eyed his sisters so closely.

"That's game talk, anyway. Live up to it. Let's be goin', Bill Deekin," said the fellow, speaking to the other.

"Good-night. If you keep your eyes peeled you may see us again 'twixt now an' Christmas," said the elder stranger. "Come on, Carter, or we'll be an hour after dark in reachin' our campin' ground."

The younger made no reply, but he looked again at the shrinking girls, and laughed strangely as he rode on.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE RENEGADE WHITES.

Night had just set in—a night dark and cloudy.

In a deep basin, made by a rim of sand hills, where a small growth of willows showed there was water—located three leagues or thereabouts to the northeast of the spot where the Herbeson family were encamped, a body of about twenty men were circled around a small camp-fire. Their horses, saddled, as if for instant use, were picketed among some clump grass.

The men, at a first glance, would be taken for Indians, for they were dressed and painted like Indians, and hideously, too.

But their English talk, and especially their oaths, told that they were white men.

"It is time Deekin and Carter got back. The trail we found was fresh—not an hour old, and they've had more than time to scout the party and see what is to be made."

"Talk of the devil and he always turns up!" said another, as a sharp whistle rang out from the sand hills to the southwest. "That is Bill Deekin's whistle."

"Yes," said the other. "Here they come."

In a minute more the two men who were at the camp of the Herbesons rode into the circle and leaped from their horses.

"So, cap, you're back! What news?"

The man known as Bill Deekin said, gruffly:

"The news is good enough. We've seen the party we trailed. They're not very rich in the way of plunder, but they've got a lot of good animiles, good shootin' tools, some provision and campin' gear, most like some money, and two of the likeliest lookin' gals we've seen since we quit the border. Hunker Ben—where's the bourbon? I'm as dry as tinder!"

Hunker Ben, about as well disguised as any of the others, arose from the blanket where he had been lying with his feet to the fire, and lifted up what he had been using for a pillow.

It was a large demijohn, which the captain uncorked and raised to his mouth.

Satisfied at last, the captain lowered it and offered it to Carter. The latter shook his head and said:

"No, cap; you drink enough for me and a half dozen more. Keep your red-eye for yourself. I don't hanker after it."

The captain grunted out some reply which brought a laugh from those that heard it. Then he took a watch from inside his hunting-coat, and, bending over the fire-light, noted the time.

"Who is on watch till midnight?" he asked, as he put the watch back.

"Me and Hort Grizzle," said a young, beardless fellow, who looked like a boy Indian.

"Well, it lacks two hours till then, and I need rest. Call me when your watch is up. We'll start three hours afore day, and we can take our time. Injuns always take the gray of dawn for surprises when they can. Then folks that aren't sharp on Injun ways are most careless."

The captain now went to his horse, unfastened a blanket from the back of his saddle, and, wrapping it about him dropped down on the ground, feet to the fire.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE IMPERILED CAMP.

"An hour before day is an early start, boys, but we must make it to reach Spotted Tail's camp before night to-morrow."

These were the last words Buffalo Bill spoke to Texas Jack and his mates when he turned in for the night, on his second night out, and long before that time the camp was all astir, teams harnessed, breakfast cooked and eaten, so as to start by the hour named.

With an early start, and the animals well fed from the grain in the forage wagons, the column made splendid headway, and had gone fully two leagues by the time the gray of dawn began to show.

"What are you on now, Jack?" asked Buffalo Bill, as he overtook the latter, who was examining some tracks.

"A wagon trail, not more than a night old, and an Indian trail right on it as fresh as if they'd just passed. Least way, it seems so to me, though it isn't light enough for me to make sure."

"I'll have to look at them," said Buffalo Bill, dismounting from his horse.

"Yes; a wagon train, a small one, with shod mules and horses," he said. "And fresher yet the trail of unshod Indian horses. There may be mischief ahead—forward with the teams, men—forward at a trot!"

"Suppose I go ahead with my men at a lope, Bill?" said Texas Jack. "Our horses are fresh, and a run won't do 'em no hurt."

"No, if you go I go, Jack," cried Buffalo Bill.

"All right, Bill. But I feel just as if there was a fight ahead of me."

"We'll soon have light enough to see, Jack. If there was a camping ground near I'd feel so, too. But it is a long ride from here to timber. When we see timber we'll be in sight of Spotted Tail's camp."

"Well, but hark, Bill. I am sure I heard a yell."



"No; it was a wolf, nothing more," said Bill, confidently.

"If so there's a pack of 'em," said Jack. "But hark! there's guns crackin'. Oh, Bill, let me ride on!"

"You're right; there is a fight. Escort, stay with the train. Sergeant, keep your men close together, and look to the wagons. I'm going with Texas Jack and the scouts."

These orders were hastily given, and he turned in his saddle and shouted to Texas Jack and the little band of scouts:

"Now, boys, I'm ready! Follow me!"

And away, silent and swift, he rode, followed in the same silent way by men who, if they knew fear, would not show it.

Lighter and lighter as they hurried on, till looking forward they saw, fully two miles ahead, the white tops of wagons and a tent, and what looked like a squad of red fiends riding in a circle about the wagons.

Buffalo Bill, when he saw little puffs of smoke rise here and there, knew that a fight was going on, and he gave a shout so wild and loud that he knew it must be heard by those who were fighting for life, and calling to his men to keep up if they killed their horses, swinging his hat high in the air, on he rode to the rescue.

"Oh, ride—ride, boys, or we'll be too late!" he shouted, as the firing all at once seemed to slacken away, while the yells rose louder and louder to his ears.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN UNFORTUNATE FATHER.

"Too late—too late!" cried Buffalo Bill, while yet a mile away from the wagons, now seen so plainly ahead, for the firing had altogether ceased.

But he did not slacken his speed, though his horse from the start had been put to the utmost—for he saw the Indians suddenly form into a compact line and ride swiftly off.

"The cusses wouldn't wait for us!" said Texas Jack, as his panting horse ranged alongside of that rode by Buffalo Bill—"but I reckon our comin' has saved the train."

"Not them that was with it, I fear!" said the noble scout, as he pressed his now almost exhausted horse. "I don't see a living man with the wagons, and the red curs have carried off all the stock."

Texas Jack said never a word now. He drew his breath hard and stuck the spurs into the flanks of his horse.

A moment more and they were at the wagons. These were three in number, with a tent in the angle formed by their arrangement.

On the ground in front of the wagons lay two young and noble-looking men, shot dead and scalped, and directly in front of the tent lay an old man, who seemed dead, and who would have been scalped had not age robbed the crown of his head of its hair.

"The old man is not dead, but there's hardly life left," said Buffalo Bill, as he bent over him. "He has been first shot and then knocked down with a club."

"Look there, Bill—look there! There were women in the tent!" cried Texas Jack, pointing to some female clothing hanging to the tent-pole inside.

"Merciful Father! Yes, there were women. Heaven

alone can help them now, for they're in the worst hands that helpless women ever knew. But we can do nothing now. I daren't take the escort from the train, nor can I leave the train until it is at Spotted Tail's camp!"

"Let me go, Bill; they're not more than ten to one of my party!" cried Texas Jack.

"No—no. I must be in the fight when they are overhauled. But give me your canteen of water, Jack; we must try and save this old man, so he can tell us how it all went."

Jack went to his saddle, got the canteen, and while Bill was at work at the old man, he examined the two young men who were dead.

"Hi, Bill!" he shouted, as he bent down close and looked at the heads of these men. "This work was never done by reds. These scalps have been haggled off by white men. You know as well as I that Indians make a clean cut and whip it off at a jerk."

"I'll be in a minute; the old man is coming to," said Bill.

"There isn't an arrow or a spear wound in either one of 'em," said Jack, as he turned the bodies over. "Injuns would have left 'em stuck as full as an old granny's pin-cushion. This has been done by white men tryin' to play Injun."

The exertions of Buffalo Bill had brought the old man so far back to life that he could see and recognize that friendly aid was there, but he seemed unable to speak. His head had been fearfully bruised; he had a bullet through his shoulder and another in his side.

The wagon-train and escort were now coming on at a trot, and Bill waited for it impatiently, for there were medical stores there that he needed, and an ambulance in which the wounded man could be laid.

When the train came up the wounded man had huskily whispered two words, and then relapsed into insensibility.

"My daughters!"

Buffalo Bill now had the wounded man put in the ambulance, and detailed a soldier to watch over him, and then he held a hurried consultation with Texas Jack and the sergeant, while a detail of men were set to work to bury the dead men.

"Strangers in our rear, riding at a gallop!" said the sergeant, saluting Cody.

"See who they are; keep the escort mounted!" cried Buffalo Bill, remounting his horse.

"A citizen, with an escort of six cavalymen!" reported the sergeant, as the party in the rear came galloping on.

The next moment a young, nice-looking man, about Cody's height, with a rather handsome face, keen, dark eyes, a heavy mustache, in citizen's dress, but well mounted and armed, rode up.

"It's Eugene Overton," shouted Buffalo Bill. "You promised me you'd come, but I thought it was all promise and nothing more. Old boy, I'm glad to see you. How did you get on my trail?"

"I reached the fort about three hours after you left, with letters from the general, and the colonel at once gave me an escort to let me join you on this trip. I want to see all the life I can in the little time I have to spare."

"You're just in time, friend Overton. Look here!"

And Buffalo Bill pointed to the dead men whom the soldiers were in the act of burying.



"There's been bad work done and hair taken here last night, and just as soon as I get this train into Spotted Tail's camp I shall take after them that did it, and show 'em Nebraska justice. I'm a justice of the peace at home, and I'll continue my office just as long as I'm on their trail!"

"Dead men—and scalped!" said Overton, with a look of horror. "I didn't expect to see such a sight!"

"Pooh! I'll show you sights before you're off the plains."

Overton shuddered. The realities of savage life had come upon him suddenly, indeed.

Presently a soldier approached Buffalo Bill.

"The burial is over, sir," said the sergeant, saluting.

"All right, sergeant. Mount your escort and we'll move forward as fast as we can travel. I'll take the lead. Leave that tent standing; it will be a good mark if we get back here in the night. For I'll be on the trail by sunrise to-morrow. Come, Overton, we'll take the lead to-day."

"Bill, may I and a couple of the boys take the trail and scout till you come up?" asked Texas Jack.

Texas Jack said this as he rode up to Buffalo Bill just after the column got in motion.

"Jack, I don't know but you're right. If you'll promise me one thing I'll let you take a couple of men and go."

"What is that?"

"That you will only trail them. It would be madness for three to fight forty, and there's fully that many of them, by the trail."

"I'll take care of my hair. I'm not insured, and don't want to lose it. I'll keep the trail and leave signs for you to follow night or day."

"Then go, Jack, and luck go with you. At sunrise I'll be on the trail."

In an instant Texas Jack and two chosen scouts dashed out from the column to take the trail.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MURDEROUS ATTACK.

The watch had just been changed in the Herbeson camp.

A negro alone was patrolling while the two brothers stood and talked.

Suddenly Harry paused, for he heard a sound like a gust of heavy wind over the prairie.

The next instant he saw a cloud-like mass close upon the camp, and with a quick, piercing shout:

"Indians! To arms!" he raised his gun, and fired at the galloping horde, which, discovered, came yelling upon them.

A bullet wound caused Harry Herbeson to drop to the ground. As he fell he saw Bill Deekin, followed by his gang of painted ruffians, bound into the little inclosure, and in an instant the wildest tumult prevailed, the occupants of the surprised camp fighting for their lives.

Harry, although fatally wounded, endeavored to rise.

Drawing his revolver, he aimed the weapon at Bill Deekin, whom he saw rudely dragging his sister Susie from the tent.

Weakness made Harry's arm unsteady, and the bullet sped harmlessly aside. With a gasp of agony he made

another effort to rise, but he sank helpless to the earth, and for him life was over.

At the same moment Mr. Herbeson, who fought as only a father can fight when his family is in danger, saw his daughter's peril, and rushed to her rescue, forgetting all other foes but the wretch who clutched Susie by the wrist.

He had only made a few steps toward the scoundrel when a rifle wound in the breast stopped all his efforts for succor.

Lottie Herbeson had been unceremoniously seized by the scoundrel Carter, but she fainted from terror.

He lifted the unconscious girl in his arms, and bore her off toward the horses, while Marmion Herbeson, struggling to reach her by dashing through the four wretches whom he was fighting, received his death-wound.

Even Norfolk Ben, the darky, had fought with heroic determination.

Observing the girls in the hands of the captors, and aware that force could now accomplish nothing, falling on his knees, the darky piteously exclaimed:

"Oh, de blessed Lor! oh, marse! Injuns, don't kill my honeys! Don't kill dese blessed angel creeturs!"

"Hold yer yap, you black devil! Don't kill him, Hort Grizzle; want a nigger to wait on me," shouted a white man in buckskin, whom the girls only too quickly recognized as one of their dreaded visitors of the night before.

"Cap, there's no time for talk. Mount the men, put the gals into their saddles. I'll see to the stock. There's help comin' that we don't want!" cried Carter.

The poor girls were lifted to their saddles and bound there, and the next instant, in the center of the yelling mass of fiends, with old Ben on a mule close beside them, the man called Captain Bill Deekin on one side, and Carter on the other, they sped away, leaving the dead behind them, for the wretched girls had no thought that their father or brothers lived—they had seen them fall.

At last, from sheer fatigue, the animals slackened their speed, though still urged on by the merciless riders.

"Halt here; ride to yonder peak, Hunker Ben, and look back over our trail!" shouted Bill Deekin at last, when noon came and they had reached a small stream between the two hills, where a few scattered trees made shade and some tolerable grass gave the horses a chance for feed.

"Gals—no squawkin', and no bother now—or it'll be the worse for you! We're goin' to let you rest a bit, if you're still and quiet. If you ain't, you'll see what I'm made of and larn that Old Nick isn't half so bad!" said the ruffian leader.

The shuddering girls dared not speak. Too full of grief to even weep, they were now only too glad of a chance to clasp their arms about each other's necks and to hide their faces from the gaze of the fiends around them.

Now for the first time Carter had a chance to tell Bill Deekin the nature of the party which he had seen approaching.

"'Twas a Government train, with soldiers in uniform, far back, but then closing in on us like mad wolves, were them cussed scouts, that don't fear nothin', and Indians less than nothin'."



"Them scouts are worse than tigers on a trail!" muttered the ruffian captain. "If they're on our trail yet, we'll have but little peace before we're with the main band in the Black Hills."

"Cap'n, we'd better up and git. There's mounted scouts a couple o' miles back. I saw 'em rise a ridge!" cried Hunker Ben, coming down from his post.

"Mount, men—mount again!" shouted the captain. "A short rest is better than none, but this has been too cussed short."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LODGE QUEEN.

It was not late in the day when the train under charge of Buffalo Bill came in sight of the camp of Spotted Tail. It was located near a stream and where timber was plenty and the smoke from many camp-fires rose in graceful columns above the grove.

When in sight, leaving the train to follow at its best speed, Buffalo Bill, with Overton and a small escort, dashed forward.

The Indians, all under arms before they knew whether friend or foe was coming, recognized "Long Rifle" before he was within a half mile, and Spotted Tail, Two Strike, Red Leaf, and a long band of warriors rode out in gala dress to receive and salute him.

Firing their guns in the air and whooping wildly, they dashed on toward the little party, and Overton, not used to that sort of thing, asked Bill if they meant well by it. To him it looked like war.

"The reds have that way of showing they're glad to see me, but it's a waste of powder!" said Buffalo Bill, quietly. "Don't mind their antics. There's no danger now; they're not wasting lead. That is worth as much or more than silver out here."

By this time the Indians were up, and Spotted Tail rode alongside of Buffalo Bill and grasped his outstretched hand.

"You thought us a long time coming with the presents from the Great Father, did you not?" asked the scout.

"The Great Father is the master of his own time. Why should we, who are poor, and so far away, count it?"

"Well, the presents are here or close behind—forty good horses, meat and bread to eat, tools to make gardens with, and corn to plant."

"The red men do not want tools. They will not work, or plow, and dig, and plant like the palefaces and the men who are black. I told the Great Father so when I was in Washington. We want guns, and powder, and lead to hunt with—blankets to keep our women warm."

"Well, I have some of them," said Buffalo Bill. "I think you and your braves will be satisfied. I have three wagons in my train which do not belong to me. They are the property of an old man who is very sick with wounds got in a fight with bad men this morning. His two sons were killed by them—his two daughters and a negro carried off. The old man is in my ambulance and his well man is here to wait on him."

"Who did this? Not Sioux?" asked Spotted Tail, abruptly.

"No, I expect it was white men disguised as Indians."

"Ugh! I will send out my braves to drink their blood."

"No, you must do no such thing. You have promised

peace, and you must keep it to all, bad and good, without you or your tribe is struck. Then you have a right to defend yourselves."

"Are we not struck in our good name, when palefaces put on war-paint and make war as if it were us?"

"Yes, in your honor. But here we are in your camp. Where is Dove Eye?"

"She is sole queen of my lodge now; my wives are dead. She will be glad to see Long Rifle; she knows he is coming."

"I have presents for her from people who have heard about her in the great cities where the sun rises," said Buffalo Bill. "Will she not come out to receive them?"

"Her mother died but four suns gone by; her hair is down, she mourns. She will not come out now, but my son, Long Rifle, will go into the lodge. He will be welcome."

Buffalo Bill alone entered the lodge.

Dove Eye rose from her seat on a pile of furs, and with her arms meekly folded on her bosom, bent her head down and waited for him to speak.

"Is Dove Eye glad to see her old friend?" asked the scout, as he extended his hand.

Dove Eye took it, raised it reverently to her lips. Then she spoke:

"Is the little flower glad to see the sun after the long, cold night? The chief can speak, but this cannot."

Dove Eye took from her bosom the picture she had obtained—the scout did not know from whom or how—and showed it to him.

"I have brought Dove Eye some presents from friends that have heard that she is good, and very brave," said the scout, moved by the incident of the picture. "They are in the wagons, which will soon be here. I will give them to Dove Eye before I go away."

"Dove Eye wants no gifts from strangers," she said, coldly. "Long Rifle said he was going away. When?"

"In a little time. Just as soon as the presents are taken out of the wagons and given to your father."

"Why must Long Rifle go so soon? Dove Eye will bind up her hair now that he has come. She will put on her scarlet robe and her coronet, and she will try to look well in his sight."

"You always look well, Dove Eye—but I must take the war-path in a hurry. Three of my hunters are on it now, trailing my enemies—and I must follow. Two fair pale-face girls are helpless in the hands of bad men. I must overtake them and rescue the girls. Did I not take you from the clutches of the Yellow Bear? Shall I not save them as well?"

"Then Dove Eye will speak against it no more. She loves Long Rifle because he is a great warrior. She will have food cooked, so he may not go away hungry."

The Lodge Queen bound up the great masses of long black hair, which fell ~~as~~ below her waist, and then, while Buffalo Bill went out to receive the wagon-train, she hurried to set her women to making a feast for the visitors.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A LETTER IN RED.

When Texas Jack dashed away from the column under Buffalo Bill with but two followers, he did not do so in



a mere spirit of recklessness, with no particular object in view.

He knew how necessary it was to keep the trail of these men, and to save those helpless girls.

As night drew on, and the country began to be more rolling, with patches of brush here and there, Texas Jack closed up on the trail, leaving once in a while a white rag on a bush, tearing up his "biled shirt" for that purpose.

"We've got to keep 'em in sight about dark," said he. "Because then, if they're sharp, they'll scatter, with an understanding of where they'll all meet, so as to throw us off the trail that the girls are taken on. But the fools forget, I reckon, that the girls are riding shod horses, for I've seen that all along."

"They're not so soft as you take 'em to be, Jack; look there," said one of his men, pointing to a lot of horse-shoes just torn from the horses' feet and left on the ground where the work had been done. "Now all the tracks will be alike."

"Not by daylight," said Jack. "The girls are light weight—their horses will make a shallow track where there's sand, as there is every few rods. And there's another comfort in this; the horses the girls are on will go dead lame in a little while, with their shoes off. I tell you, Charlie, it's no use for the curs to think they'll get away. How dark it's getting. Now they'll scatter. Keep your eyes to the trail, boys. Here is the place we'll lose 'em if we ever do. This ground won't show a hoof-mark. But there's a level beyond, which will."

He rode swiftly to a sandy plain yet to be seen in the gathering gloom, and here he found a trail. At the same instant the man to his right found one—then the other to the left fully a hundred yards found another—all diverging.

"Scattered—and night is upon us," muttered Texas Jack. "I can't see the trail plain enough to judge which is which. Let's keep on, boys—on, and trust to Providence that it will be the right one."

In silence he took the trail he had at first come to.

At times he had to stop and actually feel for the trail, but he would not give it up—he still kept forward, feeling that those helpless ones would need his aid.

"Didn't I say there was help for the good in heaven?" he cried, when he had been on the right trail nearly an hour. "Look boys!"

And turning he showed them a white handkerchief which he had found on a bush.

"One of the girls has done this on purpose to show us, if we are following. Thunder—there's red marks on it."

He lighted a match, and saw, written in blood, these words:

"If this is found by friends, come quickly.

"SUSIE HERBESON."

"Written with her own blood!"

"Yes," said Texas Jack, "and with her finger, by the size of the letters. Keep on, boys—keep on as fast as you can. This handkerchief comes just in time, for the last rag of my shirt was gone."

The noble fellow had left strips of white every hundred yards or thereabouts, since dark, upon his trail—and he had now to tear the handkerchief in strips to follow it up.

The way became more and more difficult, for now the darkness was becoming dense.

Suddenly, and it went wildly thrilling through their hearts, a woman's shriek came rushing to their ears.

"Forward!—in Heaven's name, forward!" shouted Texas Jack.

## CHAPTER X.

### A TERRIBLE STRUGGLE.

And as Texas Jack exclaimed "Forward!" letting go the bridle of his tired horse, he rushed on at the fullest speed on foot, while his two companions followed.

Again there was a wild scream, nearer now than before, and Texas Jack heard the rush of some one running through the grass and bushes, while still further on a man's loud curses, with cries of "Stop! stop!" were heard.

"One of the girls has broke away—she will be here in a minute. Save her while I nail the cuss that's coming!" cried Jack, in a tone loud enough for his men to hear, then when the girl flew so close past him that he could have touched her, for he stepped aside, he kept on a few paces and stopped just as another scream from her told him that his mates had her safe.

Then, as a man came rushing on, breathing bitter curses and threats, he was on top of him, and with the butt of his heavy navy revolver he dealt him a blow on the head which effectually silenced and disabled him for the time.

Instantly, losing not a second, he unstrapped the man's own belt, and bound his hands securely behind him, stuffed a part of his buckskin hunting-coat in his mouth, and bandaged it there; then he called to his own men to come up.

Already they had assured the poor girl that they were friends, and now, when she reached Texas Jack, she moaned out:

"Oh, go and save poor Susie!"

"Help me to do it, girl—help me to do it, and be quick!" cried Texas Jack.

"How? Only tell me how! I will die for her!"

"Livin' for her will do more good. Come with me, and cry pitifully while I lead you on. He'll think you're caught, and his mate is comin' back with you. Sing out now, for we've no time to spare."

Lottie at once understood his plan, and she cried pitifully:

"Let me go—oh, in mercy, let me go!" as Texas Jack rushed on in the direction from which she had come.

Jack swept on as swiftly as she could follow him, and now and then hoarsely uttering an oath or threat as the fellow had done, while his own men followed, confident that the man who was knocked down and tied could do nothing toward making his escape before their return.

"Louder! louder! for I see a light!" whispered Jack, looking back at Lottie.

And louder she did scream:

"Oh, have pity—have pity on me!"

"So, Carter, you've got her. My gal is in a dead faint. Hurry back, so I can get water for her!" shouted a voice ahead.

The girl lay like one dead upon the ground near a fire—just beyond her, a negro, bound hand and foot, and



gagged, was lying on his back, his great eyes wild with pain or fear, and a brutal giant of a man, with tangled hair and beard, grizzled with coming age, was holding the girl's small hand in his, as if feeling her pulse.

"I'm coming!" shouted Jack, as he came into the circle of light, and the ruffian sprang to his feet as he heard the strange voice, and drew his pistol from his belt.

But Jack was on him as he was cocking it, and both rolled to the ground together, the pistol exploding at the moment they fell.

For an instant they struggled, then, with a terrible wrench the ruffian turned his opponent over, and with a monstrous knife he would have ended his career, for it was descending upon his unshielded heart, when the negro, with wonderful coolness, kicked with his hampered feet, as he swung his body around, and struck the descending arm.

The knife flew from the ruffian's hand, and then both of the mates of Texas Jack were upon him before he could regain the weapon, or even snatch the remaining pistol from his belt.

Fearfully did Bill Deekin struggle for freedom, but Jack was on his feet in a second more, and a heavy blow dropped Deekin helpless to the ground.

A second broke the arm which tried once more to draw a pistol, and a yell of agony burst from his lips as the wretch succumbed.

"Darky, you saved my life, and I owe you the best turn I can ever do for you!" cried Texas Jack, as he cut the bonds of the negro, and took the gag from his mouth.

"De Lor', marse, if you is a frien', indeed, you is a fren' in need. My dear honey dare, Missee Susie, she done went dead, I reckon, when Missee Lottie run away. I hasn't seen her stir since!" cried the negro, Norfolk Ben, as he rose to his feet.

"She lives! she lives! It was a faint—a dreadful, deathlike faint!" cried Lottie, who had sprung to the help of her sister even while the fight was going on.

"Jack, that other chap has got away—slipped or gnawed out his fastenings. He is gone, and so are our horses, too!"

This was the cry which came from the lips of the scouts who had been sent to bring in Carter and the horses, as they rushed back.

Texas Jack now took the gag which had been used in Ben's mouth and fixed it firmly in that of Bill Deekin, and then bound him securely. Then the fire was put out.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DOVE EYE'S GIFTS.

It was but a little while after Dove Eye gave her orders before a rich, and, for an Indian camp, rare feast, was made ready for Buffalo Bill and his friends.

While Spotted Tail, with his chiefs and warriors, were rejoicing over the presents sent to them by the Great Father, the Lodge Queen, now robed in scarlet, with her coronet on her head, to do honor to Buffalo Bill and his friends, came to invite all to eat.

As his horses had to rest and feed, the gallant scout had no desire to disappoint her, much as he wished to

hurry back and take the trail which Texas Jack was already upon.

So all went to partake of the repast.

But after they had supped, and his horses had eaten the last substantial food they would be apt to get for a good while, selecting from such horses as could be spared from the train and escort enough to have a led horse for a change for himself and each man in his party, Buffalo Bill made his preparations to start.

The train of empty wagons was to return to the fort under charge of the sergeant and his men, and to the non-commissioned officer Cody gave a written report to take to headquarters, detailing what he had done. With him also he sent the old gentleman, Mr. Herbeson.

Mr. Herbeson was yet too low to talk, but when Buffalo Bill told him he would rescue his daughters if it lay in the power of man, his eyes beamed out thanks.

Spotted Tail was anxious to send a band of warriors with Buffalo Bill to help him, but the latter would not hear to it.

He would take that adventure all upon himself, for he would not risk encouraging anything which might compromise the peace promises of the great chief.

He counted his men. First, he had Eugene Overton, then came his escort of six good, well-armed and well-mounted cavalymen. But, best of all, seven hunters—men often tried, and as often proved—brave, hardy, skilled in arms and in all the phases of warfare on the plains.

His party thus made, with himself, fifteen men.

It was well on in the evening when he and his party were mounted.

"Long Rifle will take this gift from me," said Spotted Tail; "he may find it of use. Every chief of all the tribes on the plains has seen it, and they will know where it came from. If one smokes with Long Rifle through that pipe he will be his friend when he wants him, for the sake of Spotted Tail."

The chief handed Buffalo Bill his great council pipe, made from the red stone of the far Northwest, covered with curious devices from mouthpiece to bowl, and cased in the skin of a rattlesnake, adorned with beads.

"I will keep the pipe, and use it in my hour of need, should that hour come," said Buffalo Bill.

"Dove Eye has a present for her master," said the Lodge Queen. "Here it is."

She pointed to a beautiful but strong pony, loaded with a pack of provisions, led by a boy seated upon another pony—a keen, smart-looking boy, about her own age, whose bright eyes spoke courage and intelligence.

"The great warrior, Long Rifle, will be hungry by and by. I send with him cooked meat and bread made in the way Dove Eye learned to make it so she could please Long Rifle. And I send two ponies, and Kionee, the Creeper, who will take care of the ponies, and serve Long Rifle till he is tired of him. Then he can send him back to his tribe."

Buffalo Bill knew that it would pain Dove Eye very much to refuse her gifts, so he said:

"I thank Dove Eye. I will use her gifts. Kionee, the Creeper, shall ride close to me in the march. I will try to keep him safe, and when I send him back to Dove Eye I will send him without a hurt."



"Kioneer is not afraid of scars!" said the boy, proudly, straightening up in his saddle.

"He will be a great brave. Wear these, and use them if you have a chance," said Spotted Tail, and he unbelted his own knife and revolver, and buckled them about the boy's waist. Then, waving his hand, he said, "Go, and the Great Spirit go with you."

Buffalo Bill reached out his hand to Dove Eye, who raised it to her lips before she pressed it in a hard-wrung farewell, and then the scout shouted:

"By twos, left turn, and forward!"

Then, leading the way, with young Overton by his side, the gallant scout dashed off on his back trail at an easy lope, for he did not expect to be able to take the other trail till daylight, and that gait would give him time to get to where Herbeson's party had been attacked, and to feed the one ration of grain which each horse carried, before the day would dawn.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TEXAS JACK'S SIGNALS.

The wisdom of leaving the tent at the Herbeson camp still standing was evident as Buffalo Bill approached the spot, for it was visible a considerable distance, so that they could approach it at a gallop, and it marked the starting point of the enemy whom they were to follow.

Moreover, in it they found two bags of grain, which had formed the pillows to the bed where the girls slept, and from this the horses of the party had an excellent feed, thus saving the single ration they carried for another feed.

Buffalo Bill could see the trail he meant to ride at a swift lope, and thus to so gain on those he pursued as to overtake Texas Jack by or before night if it were a possible thing.

For he argued that Jack would not so push the ruffians as to hurry them, and that they had camped early, not deeming themselves pursued.

He made all his men lie down to rest while the horses fed, but he would not sleep himself, and Overton could not. So those two stood watch—the first from a habit which has enabled him to go three days and nights in a time of peril without sleeping; the other because the life was so new, so wild, so exciting.

With horses and men well refreshed, and the last better still by a cup of hot coffee and a bite of cold bread and meat, the cry of "boots and saddles, mount, men, and away!" left our hero's lips.

Just as day broke, cold and clear, they took the well-defined rail. Four or five hundred yards on they came to the spot where Texas Jack, coming from the column, had struck it, and now they swept forward at a gallop, for it was as plain as a paved street to him who led the way.

Before ten o'clock they were at the stream where the renegades halted at noon the day before, and here Buffalo Bill saw the tracks of the girls' feet where they had stood in the sand when lifted from the horses.

Near by, where Texas Jack had watered his horses, the scout found an arrow cut in a tree, pointing to a knot-hole, or hollow, a little way up.

Bill put his hand in that and drew out a crumpled leaf

from Jack's memorandum book, on which, written in pencil, he found these words:

"I'm hard after the cusses. The girls haven't come to harm, for I've been in sight all day, and by help from where help ought to come, I'll keep 'em lively till they camp, and then—I'll do the best I know how. Hurry up, for I'll want you.

"Yours to the hilt,

"Now and always,

JACK."

"He is a noble fellow—his like can't be matched this side of the Mississippi," said Buffalo Bill, as he thrust the note into his haversack.

Once more in columns of twos the party dashed on as fast as ever.

Soon Buffalo Bill saw they were coming to a hard trailing country, rocky ridges and spots where an unshod horse would hardly leave a hoof mark. But here the shirt of Texas Jack began its mission, and every little way as they rode swiftly on a white remnant of rag hanging from a bush told of the forethought of the scout and kept them at ease on the trail without having to lessen speed to look for it.

"Didn't I tell you Jack was a jewel?" cried Buffalo Bill, as he pointed out these signals to Overton.

Overton didn't say much, but he stood it nobly, his strong will bearing up against the fatigue.

Here Buffalo Bill pointed to the cast-off horseshoes, which Texas Jack saw the night before.

"Now Jack's hard work is to come, for it was sure dark when he got here, though it isn't noon, or only about noon now. If they weren't in sight when they got here, Jack has lost 'em, for I can see they're getting ready to scatter. They wouldn't have cared about the shoes if they had intended to keep together."

"Ride on, ride on!" shouted Overton, eagerly. "We must be near them."

Bill made no reply, but he waved his hand as he again took the lead.

Aided by the strips of white, continually dropped by Jack in this march, the party were able to keep the trail, though it was now but one of a dozen, all leading different ways.

"There is no knowing now whether Jack is right or not," said Buffalo Bill, "for even I would be at fault here, and I'm older in trackin' than he is."

Again they rode on for some time in silence.

Suddenly Bill came to another halt. His quick eye had detected a new kind of material in the signals.

"A bit of a girl's handkerchief, with some letters on it written in blood," said he. "Jack is on the right track, and one of the girls has left a handkerchief for a sign. Maybe news written on it, too. Come on boys, come on."

And again he struck a lope.

Suddenly he halted, but it was for an instant only.

Firing was distinctly heard ahead, and it did not seem a mile away.

"Unslung your guns, look to your arms, and charge!" thundered Buffalo Bill, and away he rode as fast as his horse could run.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## TO THE RESCUE.

When Buffalo Bill rode away from the camp of Spotted Tail after the feast was over Dove Eye stood and looked long and lingeringly upon the departing column.

When they were entirely out of sight a sigh broke from her lips.

Her father, standing near her, heard it, and he said:

"Why is the heart of my child so heavy? Her sigh comes like the moan of the winter wind over the dead grass on the plains."

"Long Rifle has gone on the trail of his enemies. He has gone with few men behind him. He is a great brave, but he may be killed."

"Now let Dove Eye go in and sleep. I have a talk to hold with my chiefs, for we must go now to the lands on the Big Horn, where none but our own tribe will be allowed to come," said the chief.

Dove Eye entered her lodge.

The chief went to a great council tent, and soon the tom-tom was heard, drawing together the head men of the tribe.

The council was held late—or rather until an early hour, for the morning star was coming up when the chiefs came out from the council tent, grave and still.

Then suddenly a wild scream was heard from the lodge where Dove Eye slept, and her father and his braves rushed thither to aid her if she was in danger, Spotted Tail snatching a blazing brand from the fire as he passed.

"Why did Dove Eye cry out? Who has dared to harm the heart of Spotted Tail?" cried the chief, looking on her face filled with terror, her eyes swimming in tears.

"The Great Spirit has been in my lodge and spoken to me in a dream," she answered. "Long Rifle is in great danger. He is surrounded by enemies. He is hemmed in on every side. He has called on Dove Eye for help. He said bring twenty braves of the Sioux, or I shall go down into the river of death and rise no more. Dove Eye must go. Who will go with her? Do not all speak—there must be twenty, no more—no less."

"Spotted Tail will go with all his tribe," cried the chief. "Long Rifle shall not cry for help and I stand still."

"No—no! The Dream Angel said that only I and twenty braves should go," cried Dove Eye.

"Then it must be so," said the old chief, sadly. "The Dream Angel is sent by the Great Spirit. Who will go with the Lodge Queen of Spotted Tail?"

In an instant there was a great outcry, for every chief, brave, and warrior wished to be of the party.

Dove Eye soon settled it. There were forty in front of her, and putting her hand out, she pointed to and called every other one as they stood, by name.

"Get ready, with arms and meat at your backs, for a long, swift ride. You will have time to hunt," she said. "Be quick, before the sun looks up we must go."

She turned quickly into the lodge to make her preparations, while Spotted Tail went out to select the best horse in all his band for her to ride,

The braves had not long to wait.

Dove Eye came forth, dressed almost like Kionee the

Creeper, in hunting shirt and trousers, carrying a short rifle in her hand, a pistol and knife in her belt, ammunition by her side.

She kissed her father, then at a bound leaped astride the wild horse, waved her hand as a signal for all to follow, and without a word sped away upon the trail of him whom she so wildly, hopelessly loved.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## RAPID PURSUIT.

Texas Jack, with one of his hunters, was on watch, waiting for day and Buffalo Bill to come.

The first was soon at hand. And when it came, bright and clear, a warm meal was cooked at the fire, and the sisters, with those who rescued them, ate heartily, for the first had not tasted food the day before.

Ben was in his glory, cooking and talking, for Barnett had shot an antelope close to camp, and the fat juicy ribs were delicious when broiled over the red coals.

After the rest were all done, Ben included, food was placed before Bill Deekin, and the only hand he could use loosened so that he could help himself. He did this, and ate ravenously, like the half-savage beast that he was, and when satisfied, he looked around as if he would like to do something else.

But his feet were tied closely together by thongs wound round his ankles, and he dared not attempt to untie them.

Jack now talked to the girls to try and cheer them up, while Ben rolled over and went to sleep face down.

Barnett watched the outlaw, for the latter, lying like a crippled bear, rolled his eyes from side to side, looking hate and mischief all the time.

Thus matters went in the camp until noontime went by. No one seeming hungry nothing more was cooked.

Just after the sun had canted westward of the meridian line Texas Jack shouldered his rifle and went to a ridge a little to the right of the camp, from which he thought he could look back over his trail, hoping to catch a sight of Buffalo Bill coming.

But he saw a different sight, and one which brought all the man of his noble nature into instant use.

It was a large body of horsemen—he knew they were not Indians by the way they rode, though they were dressed and painted as such. These men were heading, on sweeping gallop, directly for the camp, but coming in behind the ridge, so that Charlie, the sentinel, had not yet seen them.

Jack knew there was not a second to lose. The men were within half a mile, and firing his rifle to call Charlie in, he rushed back to the camp.

"The hounds are comin'! Lay low by those bushes. We'll give 'em all they ask for, and more, too."

By this time Charlie came in, and Ben, wide awake, had a revolver in the waistband of his trousers and a rifle in his hand.

A yell and cheer were heard, and Bill Deekin, wild with the thought of rescue, yelled back as loud as he could.

"Ben, just stop that crow from croaking," said Texas Jack, coolly. "The court decides that he be shot."

"Ben had literally itched for the chance.

"Dar's one for Miss Susie," he said, as he fired a shot



from his revolver directly into the mouth of the wretch as he opened it to give another yell, "and dar's another for Miss Lottie, and one for me," he added, as he completely shattered his head with two more shots.

"Hold on! don't fire away all your ammunition on dead game," cried Texas Jack. "We'll need every load now."

"He's done dead anyhow! Glory for dis once!" cried Ben. But the next second he had something besides talking to do.

The full band, with Carter at its head, came sweeping over the ridge; and scattered in line, so that the shots would have less chance, they poured down on the little camp.

Texas Jack and his mates poured a volley, which was answered by a shower of shots—poor Charlie falling dead in his tracks, while Barnett sank back shot through his best arm, and with a ball that, grazing his temple, stunned him for the time.

The next moment it was a hand-to-hand affair, with only Ben and Texas Jack to keep it up.

Ben was knocked down by a plunging horse; Jack received a blow from the breech of a gun which staggered him, and then, as another sent him to the ground, he heard the cry of the red-headed leader:

"Take up the gals and leave, there's help comin'—take up the gals, and leave."

He tried to rise—did rise, raised his last revolver and fired at the red-haired villain just as he saw him lifting Lottie to his horse.

He saw the wretch reel—he knew he had hit him; then he fell himself, for he was struck by another ball, his third wound in the fight.

Half an hour later Buffalo Bill was on the ground by his side, raising his head and putting a canteen of water to his lips.

"Lively work here," Jack murmured. "Lively work—you bet. I wish you'd been half an hour sooner. Did they get the girls?"

"Yes—but they shall not keep them. They are off now, but I'll follow 'em to where they belong, and I'll rescue the girls. Poor Charlie is done for, and Barnett badly hurt—and you—"

"Never mind me; I'll be square in half an hour. Just stuff a handkerchief or a bit of your shirt in this hole. I used my shirt all up last night."

"De Lor—I've been in star-land! Whar's de missuses?" cried Ben, coming to.

"Who is this?" cried Buffalo Bill.

"Norfolk Ben—a servant to the old man we found. He is game—he fought like a tiger by my side after he'd killed that cuss, Bill Deekin, the captain of the gang, that I took last night. But there's no time to talk. You've got spare horses—our horses were all stole last night. Put us in the saddle—tie us there, and put us after the hounds. I put a ball into the red-headed cuss who seemed to boss 'em, but I was dizzy—I couldn't shoot straight. You've a stranger with you."

"Yes, Jack; this is Mr. Overton and he is true grit. He is a city man, but he rides like one of us, and won't say tire while there's game ahead. He is the one I told you of, that you're to hunt for next winter, if we're spared."

"Yes? I'm glad to see him. You told me about him. I'm glad to see him, and these blue-jackets, too. We'll need 'em all. How many have we laid out—look over toward the ridge?"

Buffalo Bill did so, and found six dead white men, disguised as Indians.

Then when Texas Jack, cheered by this news, was put into the saddle, and Barnett and Ben also mounted, the column again got in motion, stopping at the water close by only long enough to water their horses, and then following the trail of the ruffians who had fled toward a range of hills in a westerly course, they rode on as swift as they could and yet keep their horses in wind. The extra horses, for their heaviest men to change, now came in play, and Buffalo Bill felt sure he would overtake those he followed.

But if he could not do it before dark he knew it would be almost impossible to continue the chase till daylight came again, for the country grew more and more rough as they rode on.

## CHAPTER XV.

### STAKED-DOWN CANON.

When Carter, the former lieutenant, but now leader of the ruffian band, saw the party headed by Buffalo Bill sweeping down on him, he did not know their numbers, or he would have stood his ground and fought.

But he heard the ringing cheer, he saw the buckskin of the scouts and the blue of the soldier's uniforms, and with only one thought—the girls should not be left behind—he gave orders to secure them, mount and retreat.

While in the act of lifting Lottie to his own horse, he received a bad, but not an entirely disabling wound, from the pistol of Texas Jack, and he had to resign the care of the girl to another.

"Follow me, and I'll get you out of this scrape, as I have out of fifty before. If old Bill Deekin hadn't been too cussed lazy to keep a lookout while I was busy, he'd be alive and your cap'n yet, instead of havin' the top of his head blown off, as I saw it back there," cried Carter.

"You're ten to one a better cap'n than he ever was. Three cheers for Snap Carter!" shouted one of the ruffians.

"I go that and three better!" cried Hort Grizzle.

"I see you and a yell," said Hunker Ben, and the wretches gave a cheer which made the ears of the wretched captive girls tingle as they were forced forward in the rapid rush.

"That's noise enough, boys. Save your wind till it is needed," cried Snap Carter. "Them scouts and blue coats are started again. If we can make the hills at the head of Lodge Pole by dark we are safe; if we can't, we'll have to stop at some good point and fight it out."

"We can fight 'em better in the hills. I know every crook and turn there," cried Hort Grizzle.

"No better than I do," said Snap, who, while he rode, had managed to bandage his wound. "Give me your canteen, Hunker Ben. I'm not much on whisky, but this lettin' of blood weakens me."

"There isn't much in it. Bill Deekin got one pull at it afore we parted last night, and you know a quart didn't go far with him," said Ben.



Then the canteen was passed over, and Snap Carter took the little that was left.

It revived him somewhat, and he turned to look at the two girls who had once more fallen into his power.

"You've found out that there's more than one slip between the cup and the lip, haven't you?" he said, with a fiendish sneer on his bad face.

"I have found out that your partner in crime is dead, and you will follow him," said Lottie.

"Not till I've broke your proud spirit, you pretty vixen," said the wretch. "You've found a devil in me, you have!"

"You never spoke a truer word, Snap Carter—if that is your name."

"It is my name. Hallo, Tom, what's up?"

The last words were addressed to a man left to ride a quarter of a mile in the rear with two others as a rear guard.

"Them chaps are a gainin' on us fast—they're not more than a mile behind my mates," said the man.

"Have you had a chance to count 'em?"

"Yes. There are nineteen, all told—if I can count straight."

"How many scouts—for they're worse than the Boys in Blue."

"All but six are scouts, I think. There's one Injun."

"And we're fifty-two men—not one got a scratch but me."

"Boys, I'm not goin' to run much farther. If we can't wipe out a crowd of that size, it's time we left the plains and took to petty larceny in the cities. We are almost three to their one, and, if we're cool, can get the first shot."

"Hadn't we better wait till we get to the Staked-down Cañon?" asked Hort Grizzle. "We could hold that ag'in a thousand men—let alone nineteen."

"It's just the place for us to halt in," said Snap Carter. Then, turning to the rear guard, he said:

"Wait here till your men come up; then watch the chaps behind us close up. Get a shot, if you can, to drop the headmost and keep 'em back. When I'm in the right spot ahead, I'll fire three shots, one after the other, and you come in quick. Hail us as you come, so we'll know, for it'll be dark in a little while."

The rear guard halted for his mates to come up, while the main body swept forward, with Hort Grizzle as guide.

The country grew wilder and wilder as they rode on, and the shades of coming night were deepening fast.

Soon they heard the dash of water, and in the gathering gloom saw that they were entering a dark and gloomy cañon between two enormous cliffs.

Only a couple of minutes more of riding and then Hort Grizzle, turning a sharp angle of the rock, shouted:

"Here we are! This is the spot, cap'n. How d'ye like it?"

"First rate—it is just the place. Light up in the cavern you told of, and stow the gals there. Hunker Ben, you guard 'em."

The ruffian leader now drew a revolver, and raising it in the air, fired three shots in succession, and then turning, he ordered his men to dismount, fasten their horses, and to stand to arms.

"We'll soon hear where the fools are that have been losing time chasing us," he cried.

At the same moment a fire flashed up in a deep cavern in the side of the cliff, and by it he saw the two girls, guarded by Hunker Ben, standing pallid and wretched in the gloomy place.

A minute later, and answering the hail of his men, the three men of the rear guard galloped in.

"Where are the scouts and the Boys in Blue?" cried Snap Carter.

"Close behind, cap—close behind!" cried the leader of the three. "I fired on 'em twice, and got a ball through my hat from that cuss, Buffalo Bill."

"Ready, men! Ready!" shouted Snap Carter.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BUFFALO BILL'S TACTICS.

"We're closing fast—I saw one of the scoundrels just now," cried Buffalo Bill, in high glee, as he approached the hills. "If we can only get 'em before they get into a cañon there that I know of we can have a square fight. If they get there first we'll have all we want to get them out or do anything with them. Old Bridger and I found it out about ten years ago. There was a gang of Ogalala in chase of us, and we got in there. We gave 'em hail Columbia, and made 'em the sickest lot of reds you ever saw."

They were just entering the dark cañon, when far away up in the dark gloom they heard three shots.

"Those are signals," said Buffalo Bill, halting his men by a wave of the hand as he checked Powder Face, his horse, by a word. "The advance is posted and the rear guard is called in. We've got to feel our way."

It was now dark. He rode a couple of hundred yards in silence, and then dismounted, passing the word for the rest to do the same.

The horses were now led up and tied head to head so a single man could take care of them, and then the scout gave his orders.

He held no consultation, for he knew the ground, and no one knew better how to fight on it. But his first thought was whom he could use, and next how he could best save those whom he must use.

He wanted Texas Jack to stay with the horses, for he was yet weak from his wounds, though not disabled. But the heroic Texan would not listen to this. If there was a fight, and he knew there must be, he was in for it, and would be if he knew it would be his last. Barnett, though only able to shoot left-handed with his revolvers, would not hang back.

Even the Indian boy, Kionee the Creeper, refused to stay behind, for he said:

"Dove Eye bade me go close to Long Rifle and not to leave him."

"Overton, I reckon I'll have to leave you as a horse-guard," said Buffalo Bill, at last, to his friend.

"Don't talk to me!" said Overton, impatiently. "As to my playing horseguard here, it isn't on the bills. Where you go in this fight I'm going. That's as good as sworn to."

"I never did see fellows so anxious to have blood let as you all are," said Bill, laughing. "I'll have to use my authority. Corporal," said he, to the non-commissioned



officer in the cavalry escort, "select one of your men to take charge of the horses, while we creep forward and engage."

The corporal selected the man, who had to obey orders, and then Buffalo Bill gave his final instructions.

Each man, following as close to him as possible, was to keep close to the rocks on the right. If a shot was fired from ahead or a hail heard, they were to drop low, and only to fire when the enemy was massed. If Buffalo Bill saw a chance for a rush, and the enemy had any fire built by which they could be recognized, all were to charge and to do their level best to "wipe out" or destroy the crowd and rescue the captives.

All matters settled, and orders understood, the scout crept forward. For at least six hundred yards, past the noisy waterfall, and until he was near the sharp bend in the cañon, he went without interruption, or hearing any sound to tell him they had halted.

"They're gone through, haven't they?" whispered Overton.

"Hush! See there!" said Bill, as he pointed to a glimmering reflection on the water to the left, made by the fire in the cavern. On this reflection, dim and faint, but visible to such eyes as the scout had, could be seen dark marks, the shadows of men standing between the fire and the water.

Buffalo Bill now waited till his men were all up, so they could touch each other.

Then, whispering to all, even Overton and Kionee, not to move, he crept so far that his head turned the angle of the rock. As he did so he accidentally knocked a stone from the cliff that he touched.

In a second a volley of balls whistled by where he had been, for he drew back too quickly for them to harm him.

"They're there in a body, and well posted," he whispered. "I don't see what we can do before daylight. Then we can pick some of 'em and maybe make a charge. To do it now would be madness. But we're as safe here as they are there, and I don't know but safer, for we've got water where it'll show their shadows, and not ours. We'll stick it out till daylight."

"You will, eh?" said a sneering voice, so close around the turn that Buffalo Bill knew he had been overheard. "Well, take it easy till then, for it is the last rest you'll get."

Bill did not reply. He is not in the habit of wasting words, especially when in a tight place. Even breath is worth something then. He drew back a very little and bade the rest, in a whisper, not to sleep, but to take easy positions and wait. He would let them know when it was time to work.

Little did he dream of the plan at that moment forming for his destruction.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LABOR LOST.

It was Snap Carter himself who had overheard Buffalo Bill whispering to his followers, and who answered him. He hoped in doing it to provoke the scout and his party to make a rush, for he had every gun so pointed in his party that it would have swept the ranks of those who attacked him.

Failing to provoke a charge, not daring to try it himself, another idea entered his brain, so fertile in wickedness. He went to the rear, where Hort Grizzle stood, and asked him in a low tone if he knew any way by which the rear of the party of their assailants could be approached before daylight.

"Yes," said Hort. "I can get there in two hours or less. There is another cañon below here that I can get to the rear through."

"So as to stampede their horses?"

"Better yet, to hem them in and wipe 'em out entirely. You know how narrow it is where we entered, and that for fully two hundred yards it is straight as a beeline before it makes a turn."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Then how easy it would be, with the loose rocks at the mouth of the cañon, to wall up a good breastwork, too high for their animals to cross, and from behind it, with ten or a dozen men, to sweep them down if they tried to charge out of the straight, narrow pass."

Ten minutes later Hort Grizzle was moving west out of the cañon, with ten of the desperadoes under his command.

Then, keeping a portion of his men ready to fire if any attempt was made to interrupt him, Snap Carter commenced building a breastwork just beyond the turn in the cañon.

Word now came up the line that the man with the horses wanted to see Buffalo Bill.

"I don't like to leave my post," said the scout. "But you stay right where you are, Overton. Texas Jack is next. He knows what to do."

The scout slipped back and soon reached the place where the horses were fastened.

"I can hardly keep your horse still, sir; he wants to face the rear," said the soldier. "I think there is something up there—I've heard noises, singular noises, two or three times."

"Powder Face is sure to know it if there's danger in the wind," said Buffalo Bill. "Maybe they left a squad out there to cut off our retreat. If they did it is all lost trouble. I don't intend to retreat. I shall go forward when day dawns."

"That will be soon. There is gray in the east now," said the sentinel.

"True—enough for me to look back a ways and see if there is really a gang in our rear."

Buffalo Bill crept along under the edge of the cliff a short distance, until he became satisfied that there was a party in the rear, and that they had built a breastwork to cut him off in that direction.

"It is all labor lost," he said, as he passed the sentinel. "Stand by your horses till we need them to advance."

Regaining his first position, nearest the enemy, Buffalo Bill waited, with the patience which no one but a good warrior or a true scout can show, for the approach of daylight.

They were too far in the deep chasm for them to see when the morning star rose, but that there was a change in the density of the gloom, Buffalo Bill was the first to notice.

"Keep wide awake now, boys," he whispered. "Day is coming and we must watch for chances. The first



deathshot is everything in a fight like this. It brings luck, and I must have it."

Laying aside his hat, Bill crept to a new position, down nearer the water, where a rock and some bushes covered him, and from which the rest of his party could see him and receive orders and signals, though there was room for but one where he lay.

There was a ledge which, if gained, would overlook the position where Texas Jack, Overton, and the scout lay, and a tree reached from the ground where the ruffians were so near this ledge that a climber could ascend it and leap from the topmost branch to the ledge, if he were active and cool.

Buffalo Bill saw a young, active man, with his rifle slung to his back, attempting this feat, just as there was light enough for him to see the sight on his rifle when held toward the sky.

Motioning to Overton and the others to keep perfectly still when he fired, for they could only see him, and none of the enemy, the scout watched the ascent. It was made very quietly, and rather too rapidly, for it was yet very dark for a good shot when the fellow got to the upper branch; but it would not do to wait now, for in another second he would spring to the ledge and be out of the range of Bill's rifle.

William Cody let him have it, aiming directly for his head.

Without a word, the fellow sprang upward and fell at the instant the rifle crack was heard, dropping right down among the astonished ruffians below, who believed the tree to be out of sight of the other party.

Buffalo Bill added to their astonishment a second later, for he sent another ruffian to his account before the others realized their peril and sprang to cover.

Bill coolly held up two fingers to his own party to signify his success, and then watched for another chance.

The voice of Snap Carter was heard, swearing fearfully, and several random shots were fired toward the new position of Buffalo Bill; but he was under good cover, and knew enough to keep it. The ruffians tried hard to get a sight on him, and soon lost another man for their pains.

"There's but one thing to do—we've got to charge and wipe 'em all out," yelled Snap Carter, letting Bill get only a glance at his head.

"Just try it, Sorrel-top, and see which does the cleanest work in the wipeout," yelled Buffalo Bill.

"I'll show you cussed soon!" was the reply.

Then, at that moment, when Overton and his party were all braced up to receive the charge, terrible yells and a rapid firing were heard in the rear.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A GALLANT CHARGE.

"They are Sioux!" cried Kionee the Creeper, wild with joy. "They are Sioux, and Spotted Tail has come to help Long Rifle."

The words of the boy sent a thrill of joy to the heart of Buffalo Bill, for, brave as he was, he knew that he had terrible odds to contend against in that fight.

"Go, half of you, with Kionee, to hail the warriors—go back and help to make a clean sweep of them who are in the rear, and then, when you come back, we'll

teach these hounds in front what charging means," cried Buffalo Bill.

"Charge now and let them learn!" yelled Snap Carter, furious to hear the shots and shouts which told him that Hort Grizzle and his gang had themselves been taken in rear, and most likely were now catching it in front.

Three men sprang to lead, and Buffalo Bill saw them.

Not quicker does the electric spark leap along the telegraphic wire than did his finger twice press the trigger of his repeating gun. Two men leaped into the shadow of death, while the third staggered back appalled.

"Try that charge again, woman-stealers!" shouted Cody.

"I'll lead it myself, when we do charge!" cried Snap Carter.

"Do?" said Bill, in the same taunting tone.

There was no reply, but he heard noises which made him almost certain that they were about to charge, and in a low tone the scout told his men to be ready, and to take it coolly, and fight sharp when it came hand to hand.

The firing now slackened in the rear, and in a few moments Buffalo Bill knew by the wild, terrible scalp-yells that he heard that the Sioux were completely victorious.

He had not long to wait for a certain knowledge of that event, for Kionee came rushing back with the Indian word for victory on his lips, and adding to it:

"Dove Eye—Dove Eye!"

"Surely she can't have come on my trail to help me!" said Buffalo Bill, in astonishment, almost forgetting the peril in front.

Not a minute later he saw her rushing on, rifle in hand, heading even Red Leaf as she hurried to the rescue of Long Rifle.

Fearful that she would throw herself in range of a fire from the front, the brave scout sprang back from his cover, risking his own life rather than that hers should be endangered, but, to his wonder, he was not even fired at.

Then, under cover, he met the heroic Lodge Queen.

"Why is Dove Eye here—so far away from her father's camp?" he asked.

"She came to save Long Rifle from his enemies, who were before and behind, and wanted to drink his blood."

"But how did Dove Eye know that I was overmatched and surrounded?"

"The Great Spirit told me so in a dream," said the girl.

"I'll believe in dreams after this," said Bill. "Did your father consent to have you come?"

"Yes. He gave me twenty warriors. Two are dead. We will go back and bury them, after all your enemies are killed. See—Red Leaf, the great chief, has six scalps in his belt. Two were from heads that I laid low. I know that Long Rifle did not scalp his enemies with his own hand, so I told Red Leaf to take my scalps. Have I done well?"

"Nobly, brave Dove Eyes. You have saved our party. But this reminds me that there are others to save. You have eighteen warriors left. I have not lost a man here."

"Will Long Rifle listen to a word of counsel from Red Leaf?" said the young chief, stepping forward.



"Yes," answered Buffalo Bill. "Yes, for Red Leaf is wise in counsel, as he is terrible in battle. I will hear what he has to say."

Red Leaf bowed his head to the compliment, and said: "Red Leaf knows all this country well. He has gone through this pass a great many times. He knows where there is another pass, which he can go through before the sun is as high as a small papoose. He can go that way with his warriors, and come on the backs of the enemies of Long Rifle, and none can get away."

"The idea is splendid," said the scout, delighted at the plan. "We'll play their own game on them."

The Indians, at a signal from Red Leaf, now filed rapidly away, and Buffalo Bill, placing only a guard to watch the front, fell back with the rest to get something to eat, for they had been too busy to attend to the inner man.

An hour was thus spent, and Overton had got over his chill, when all at once a gun, a single report, was heard away in the west.

"The signal!" cried Buffalo Bill, and his whole face flushed with a happy light. "Red Leaf has got to the end of the pass, and the retreat of the wretches in front has been cut off. Now, all hands listen to me. There'll be no play in the work before us. A cornered rat fights hard, and when even a coward can't run he'll shut his eyes, cry, and battle like a mad tiger. I've seen it, and know it. This work will be mostly hand-to-hand. So, put down your rifles and trust to your revolvers and knives."

"Dove Eye, stay back a little till the first of it is over."

"Dove Eye knows her place—she will keep it," said the Lodge Queen, proudly, as she pressed even yet closer to him.

"Well, ready then!" said Bill, and he drew his keen bowie-knife from the belt. "Watch me and follow where I lead. Charge, men, charge!"

And away he leaped, like a panther on its prey.

When he turned the angle of rock, and faced a wall just built, higher than his head, Buffalo Bill thought he and his party would have their hands more than full, but he did not hesitate a second; he sprang toward it.

In a second he was over, not meeting a volley as he expected, but seeing only the dead men on the ground, whom he had killed.

"They have fled!" he cried, as his people came pouring over the breastwork behind him. "The cowards would not wait for us. But Red Leaf will intercept them, unless they got out before he reached the pass, and we'll soon know."

"There's a fire there," said Overton. "I'm going to see how it feels."

"Why, man, you are all in a sweat now," said Bill.

"Am I—well it was some exertion to get over that wall—breastwork, I suppose you'd call it. But look—Bill—here is a piece of paper—a letter—oh, what a hand to be written by a girl in such peril. She is as cool as—as cool as I was a while ago."

And Overton handed the paper to Buffalo Bill.

It was written apparently with a pencil on a page torn from a pocket diary. It read thus:

Brave friends, do not desert us. We are two helpless girls, in the hands of heartless ruffians. They are now getting their horses ready to fly and we are left alone for a moment. The

leader, Snap Carter, says he will not halt till he gets to Nick's Cave in the Black Hills. I heard him tell one of his men so just now. Oh, help us, and may Heaven help you!

LOTTIE HERBESON.

"Snap Carter? I know the wretch!" cried Buffalo Bill. "He was run out of Cheyenne by the vigilantes. He is a devil incarnate. Overton, read that letter!"

The eyes of Overton were moist as he read, and "Bill," said he, "one who could write such a letter, under such circumstances, must be a queen among women."

"Hark—there comes Red Leaf!" cried Buffalo Bill, hearing distant yells. "I must answer him."

And he put his hand to his lips and uttered a shrill cry.

It was answered by Red Leaf, and soon he and his warriors came bounding forward, their guns at a trail, for they had already discovered by their tracks that the white ruffians had fled from the pass.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### AT SUPPER.

Snap Carter had made a good estimate of the time before Buffalo Bill could get fairly started on his trail.

Fully three hours had gone by since the renegades left the pass before Buffalo Bill and his column took up the trail, and even then the Indian horses, tired by the long, steady run of all the day before and the continued night march, were in no condition to hold the pace on which Snap Carter and his gang started.

But the party was in better condition for the delay. Texas Jack had got his wounds carefully dressed, as had also the others, and felt strong and able to ride as far as any of the party.

Norfolk Ben, a little sore from the pounding he had got on the head, was all ready for more of it.

Overton no longer talked about quilted saddles, but he kept thinking of, and once in a while talking about, her who wrote that "beautiful hand," and whom he was determined to rescue with his own hands if it could be done.

The sun was almost down when the column, following the trail in the water as well as out with unerring sagacity, reached the spot where the other party rode out on the flinty ridge, and then turned back.

"Didn't I say the beasts would go lame when they took the shoes off?" cried Texas Jack, exultingly, as he marked how quickly the hard ground had been felt. "We'll overtake 'em now, sure."

"Of course we will," said Buffalo Bill. "They made quite a halt here—built a fire to cook by. I reckon they think we've given up the chase."

"Then they're out," said Overton. "We'll be up to them in two or three hours more."

"Not to-night," said Cody, with a grave look. "Our animals are pretty well used up; they must have rest and grass. This is the best feeding ground we'll get this side of the Black Hills. We'll have to stop here to-night."

"When I think of those poor girls," said Overton, "I'm so sorry we can't go on."

"You'd be more sorry if we were out on the plains when that broke," said Buffalo Bill, and he pointed to a dark storm-bank rising swiftly in the west.

"What will they do, if they are out in it?" asked Overton, his thoughts only on the girl captives.



"They'll weather it, I reckon; but we must put the horses out while we can. When that storm breaks we've got to have 'em in where we can attend to them, or they'll stampede."

Buffalo Bill now gave the necessary orders, and the stock was put to feed, fires built, and food quickly cooked, while there was a chance. Far away could be heard the muttering thunder.

Dove Eye, though pressed to eat with the men, would not, but waited on by Kionee, she sat apart and took her food, while Red Leaf and the other Indians did the same.

When through, Red Leaf and the Indians quickly prepared a shelter from bark stripped from the trees, fastened to poles set upon upright crotches, and covered with other poles, in the thickest of the grove—made especially for Dove Eye; but not until Buffalo Bill and Overton consented to share the shelter would she promise to use it.

The horses were now firmly fastened to trees, the arms secured, with the ammunition, from the approaching rain, and even the sentinels called in to the shelter of the grove, for there was no danger of attack in such a storm as that which was now close upon them.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A TERRIFIC STORM.

They had left the stream and its tree-borders far behind before Snap Carter and his crowd noticed the storm-bank that was rising in the west. Then the ruffian crew were sorry they had not kept nearer the timber, for in an open plain, where the wind has a fair sweep, the tornadoes of the far West are sometimes as terrible to man and beast almost as the dreaded siroccos, or hot sand-storms of the Great Sahara Desert.

Carter urged on his horses to their full speed as night drew on, hoping to at last reach some ridgy country ahead, where he could camp partially sheltered from the wind, if not from the rain.

But his horses, already pressed very hard for two days, refused to respond to whip and spur, and night came upon him while yet in a very open country.

The storm was now on the point of bursting, and he knew that mounted he could not keep his animals together, and that he must dismount and face the weather, let it come as hard as it might.

"There's one comfort," he said, when he gave the order to dismount and halt, to tether the horses and fasten them head to head.

"I'd like to know what it is?" said Hunker Ben, as he looked at the dense black clouds.

"There'll be torrents of rain by and by to wash out every track we've made," said Carter. "Isn't that comfort? I'd like to see the scout that could find our trail after this storm sweeps by."

A low laugh involuntarily broke from the lips of Lottie. She was thinking of the note she had left behind her, and which she felt sure must have reached the hands of the bold scout whom these ruffians so much dreaded. And she laughed without a thought of being heard, and some way because she couldn't help it, for before her last great sorrow there was not a merrier girl alive than she.

"What are you laughing at, girl?" said Snap Carter, suspiciously.

"To think how it is going to rain, and we without even an umbrella," she said, so innocently that he laughed, too.

"We'll try to fix some kind of a shelter for you girls," he said. "We men can stand a drenching that would wash the life out of you. Here, men," he added, "stack yours arms, muzzles down—stick 'em deep in the sand in a circle. Then we'll draw a couple of blankets over the pile, lash 'em secure, and let the women huddle under them as close as they choose. Hurry up; the storm is coming."

The men understood his idea, though it was a new one to them, and soon a tolerable and very firm shelter was arranged for the captives.

Now, the utter darkness which fell upon them was appalling. The silence, too, was terrible—the silence of the grouped men and animals—for it seemed like the stillness of death, or that of a terror which could not speak.

But the silence was not of the elements long. The thunder, which had been rolling its deep-voiced warnings from afar, now broke loud and fearful close at hand, and the ragged, zigzag lightning ran in red streaks here and there, as if huge serpents of fire were at war in the sky, lighting up the groups of scared men and horses, and making them seem thrice as large as they were.

The girls tried to shut their eyes to all this, but when the wind came screeching on, blowing till the men and horses seemed unable to stand, and indeed did lie down, the girls dared not do otherwise than look up.

"Oh, how fearful!" moaned Susie.

"Yes, yes!" said heroic Lottie.

But now the wind and the thunder, and then the rain, in awful torrents, made so much noise that they could not talk.

How long it lasted they could not tell.

The shelter, strange as it was, was so well made that it withstood the rain and the wind, and when at last the storm broke away, and benumbed men and animals felt some relief, the girls were dry as when they went beneath it. The clouds went with the rain and the wind, and once more all was still but the dripping of the water from the scant shrubbery, or the growling of wet, discontented men.

The stars shone out in a clear, cold sky, and Snap Carter ordered the line of march to be taken up again. For here there was no feed for the horses, no fuel to light a fire to dry by—they might better get warm in motion than to lay or stand about on the wet ground, half chilled to death.

So the girls were remounted, and the crowd rode on till the day dawned, and then in a small valley, where there was a little wood and a great deal of water, they camped to dry their clothes and arms, and cook some food.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AN ARMY OF WARRIORS.

So well prepared in the thick grove of willows and cotton-wood, where the wind had but a poor sweep, was Buffalo Bill and his crowd for the storm, that it came and went by without doing them any damage worth speaking of. Their stock was well secured and not a horse broke loose to disturb the quiet of the others.



So when the day dawned, bright and clear, there was nothing to keep them back from the pursuit.

"Why, the rain is over," said Overton, when he rose from between the two india-rubber blankets spread out by the forethought of the scout. "It was just coming down in rivers when I went to sleep."

"It did sprinkle a little in the night. By the way that river howls we'll have a bad chance for a crossing."

"Do you want to cross here?" asked Overton, looking at the red, turbulent torrent.

"I did, if I could, for we could shorten our route to the hills by at least half a day, if not more. The stream takes a terrible bend right here. I don't want those scoundrels to get so far ahead of us."

"Then do let us push on."

"I will as soon as the horses feed and the rest of us get a bite to eat," said Buffalo Bill, in his quiet way.

So Overton lighted a cigar and smoked while breakfast was preparing, unconscious that Dove Eye, who had made her toilet at the river side, was making a study of him in her quiet way.

"Chief, there's smoke away here to the left, across the river," said Texas Jack. "A camp, but it's a long way off!"

"Yes; these rascals got across before the storm, and they're drying up now. But we've got to go farther up before we can cross. We'll move just as soon as breakfast is over. Ah! what do you see there?"

Buffalo Bill pointed to more smoke rising to the right of the stream—several large pillars, as if there was a big camp in that direction.

"Smoke!" said Texas Jack, "and built too careless for Indians. Our game is there."

"I believe you!" cried Bill. "We'll saddle up in a hurry. If our game is there we'll be on them to-night, as sure as I'm a sinner."

In twenty minutes the horses were all up, and in ten more the column was in motion—the morning meal having been swallowed in a hurry; for the scout felt sure that he would again strike the direct trail of those he pursued.

"This is something like!" said Overton, as he rode forward at a gallop by the side of the scout once more.

"Like what?" asked Bill.

"Like going!" said Overton. "I hope you'll keep it up till we overtake those fellows."

"No more talk about quilted saddles," said Buffalo Bill, smiling. "You're broken in. Halt—close up!"

The last order, given to the column in a sharp voice, as Buffalo Bill checked his own horse on the instant, told that something unusual caused it.

Overton looked ahead, and just rising a ridge, directly in front, he saw what seemed to him at least a thousand mounted Indian warriors.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### SMOKING THE PIPE OF PEACE.

"I reckon we'll have a stirring time now," said Overton, as he saw this painted horde, their line bristling with spears, halt on the crest of the ridge, while Bill, as if to himself, ejaculated:

"Shoshonees!—and a war party!"

"Snakes! Worse than Shoshonees!" said Red Leaf,

gravely, for he had ridden forward to the extreme front now.

"Snake or Shoshone, if they mean fight, we'll have our hands full," said Buffalo Bill. "I'll have to try strategy. I'll soon see what they are made of. Texas Jack, I leave you in command while I'm gone. Overton, keep back. Red Leaf, come with me—lend me that spear of yours."

All this was said in a few seconds, and when Buffalo Bill and Red Leaf galloped on directly toward the Indians the former fastened a white handkerchief to the spear-head.

"Form in circle, ready to face out; dismount, and tie the animals head to head, and hobble!" cried Texas Jack, the moment Bill rode on.

He knew how the attack would come if it was made; that the band, though large enough to ride them down in one wild, sweeping charge, would not make that, but would circle around them like a hawk swooping above its prey, picking them off, and watching for a chance to break them apart before they made a direct dash.

This quick and prompt formation for defense was not lost, for it made the Indians on the ridge hesitate, and when Buffalo Bill, with Red Leaf, was within rifle shot of them, and there halted, several warriors, evidently chiefs, rode up together to consult.

Buffalo Bill, with Red Leaf by his side, sat motionless on his horse, holding the spear erect, so that the white flag blew out plainly visible in the gentle breeze.

There seemed to be quite a discussion going on among the Indians on the ridge, for violent gesticulations were seen among them, and it was evident that some were for immediate attack, without waiting to see who were in front, and that others, with cooler, wiser heads, opposed it.

Buffalo Bill took advantage of this delay to fill the great council-pipe which Spotted Tail had given him, and which he carried over his shoulder in its sling, and lighting it, he commenced to smoke.

Red Leaf, looking on the pipe with veneration, said:

"My brother must not lose the great council-pipe of Spotted Tail."

"Not without I lose myself," said the scout. "It may come in use pretty soon."

The wiser counsel among the Snake warriors seemed to prevail, and now two chiefs rode out singly from the main body, and came toward where the scout and Red Leaf sat on motionless horses.

"Do you know them?" asked Buffalo Bill, as the chiefs came slowly nearer.

"No," said Red Leaf. "The Snakes and the Sioux do not often meet. They have been at war, though now they have promised the Great Father, like us, to keep peace."

By this time the Snake chiefs were within pistol shot, and they checked their horses.

Buffalo Bill rode boldly forward half way, and planted the spear-butt in the ground, laid his rifle down beside it, and dismounted.

Red Leaf, without instructions, kept his post, ready, if he saw a hostile motion, to use his weapons in defense of the scout.

The Snake chiefs looked at the scout, spoke a word to each other, and dismounted. Then they took off their



arms and laid them down by their horses, an example which Red Leaf followed.

Then the three Indians at once advanced to the spot where the scout had planted the spear.

"How!" said Bill, using the salutation common to every tribe in the West which ever mingle with white men.

"How!" grunted the Snake chiefs, but they did not reach out their hands in friendship, though both looked at the pipe which Buffalo Bill smoked as if they knew it.

"The Snake warriors have come a long way south of their hunting grounds," said Buffalo Bill. "Are there no buffalo on their lands that they must come here?"

"Who is the pale-face who questions the red man who is master of the plains?" asked the oldest chief.

"I am known to the red men as Long Rifle; the Black-feet have called me Sharp Eyes, because I can see through a red man's heart and read his thoughts," said the scout, without any bravado in his tone.

"Ugh! What is the Gray Wolf, who stands before you, thinking of now?"

And the old chief pointed to the younger.

"Gray Wolf has been counting how many is in my band of red braves and white warriors, and he is thinking his tribe would lose many men if they went to battle with us."

"Ugh! It was so," said Gray Wolf, in astonishment, perhaps not thinking that every look and expression of his face had been studied even while the scout was speaking.

"What am I, the 'Man with the Strong Hand,' thinking of?" asked the old chief.

"You are thinking that he who holds the great council pipe of Spotted Tail in his hands, and talks, while Red Leaf, the great war chief of the Big Horn Sioux, is still, must be a mighty warrior."

"Ugh! The pale-face has read the thoughts of the Man with the Strong Hand."

"Then smoke the peace-pipe," said the scout.

The oldest chief said:

"I will go back and talk to my people. Gray Wolf will stay here."

And he turned, went to his horse, mounted, and rode back, leaving his arms behind him.

Again the head men gathered together on the ridge, while all the rest of the Indians sat still and motionless on their horses.

As usual, the younger men were wild for war. At last wiser counsel prevailed.

The Man with the Strong Hand came back, and with him the head chief of the party, both unarmed.

Buffalo Bill saw that the talk would now most likely end peacefully, so he turned over the great pipe, and carefully refilled it with tobacco.

When the two Indians came up the chief introduced them.

"This is Red Lightning, the great war chief of the Snakes," he said. "When he strikes men go down like grass that is dry before the fire."

"If Red Lightning has come to smoke the pipe of peace with Long Rifle, a soldier of the Great Father, and with Red Leaf, a chief in the Sioux Nation, then Long Rifle is glad, and he will light the pipe which he has filled. If not he will go back to his band and fight."

"The pale-face makes a brave talk, and he looks as if he

had a brave heart. Red Lightning will smoke the pipe of peace."

Cody lighted the pipe, and passed it first to Red Lightning.

The latter put it to his lips, drew a mouthful of smoke, and sent a cloud circling in the air, in honor of the Great Spirit.

Then, four successive blasts of smoke were sent north, east, west and south, to show that there must be peace in every quarter from which the wind blows.

This done the chief handed the pipe to Buffalo Bill, who imitated Red Lightning in his ceremonies, and then handed the pipe to the Man with the Strong Hand.

Each one, Red Leaf included, having smoked the pipe with the same ceremony, its ashes were emptied out, and the pipe was gravely restored by the scout to the sacred rattle-snake case in which it was always kept.

"Before I go to my people, will Long Rifle tell me where he and his party are going?" asked Red Lightning.

"We go after some bad pale-faces who, dressed like Indians, murdered the men of a small emigrant party and stole their women. We saw their smoke a while ago, but it has gone out while we have been talking."

"The eyes of Long Rifle are very sharp; he will soon find the trail of his enemies. Now let our people meet in peace, then we will change presents with each other so we may know when we meet again that we are friends, and we will part."

"Where does Red Lightning mean to ride?"

"First, to where buffalo is plenty, to dry meat. Then back to fight the Black Feet, for they came in on our village one moon ago and took scalps."

Buffalo Bill now mounted, and while the Snakes went back to their line he rode to his, followed by Red Leaf.

"It's all over," said Bill, addressing Overton. "They hung fire a good while, and I thought one time we'd have to fight. But I worked 'em down, after they saw the pipe of Spotted Tail, so it is all right now. We've got to make some presents directly, but don't give away all you've got. Keep every weapon; those are what they like to get, but those they must not have."

"Ready, men; mount and prepare to answer their salute in their own fashion," continued Buffalo Bill, as he saw the Indian line begin to move.

"Heavens, Bill! they're charging right down upon us," said Overton, cocking his rifle.

"Of course they are," said Bill, coolly. "Have you any hair to spare?"

"A pretty time for joking! Why don't you give orders to fire?" cried Overton, angrily, for the whole body of Indians, wildly yelling, were coming at a swift gallop right toward them. "I'll let 'em have the contents of my Spencer, anyway."

"Hold on! Don't be foolish!" cried Bill, seeing that Overton really would fire. "They're only showing off."

At the same instant the Indian mass parted right and left, firing their guns in the air, and swept by, whooping and yelling, as Buffalo Bill, giving the word, caused his party to return the salute.

Then coming back in line, the Snakes dismounted and the chiefs came forward to where Buffalo Bill, Overton, Dove Eye, Red Leaf and Texas Jack stood apart from the rest.



The Snake chiefs were astonished to find a woman, and she the daughter of a great chief, in the party, and Red Lightning seemed greatly smitten with her beauty, as well as her courage.

Presents were now exchanged—pipes, tobacco, medals, scarfs, etc.—to the apparent satisfaction of all parties, and then once more the peace-pipe, this time that of the Snakes, was lighted and smoked by the head men on all sides.

Then both parties mounted and separated, the Snakes going south, and Buffalo Bill once more heading to the west.

"Full four hours lost!" muttered Overton, looking at his watch as the march was resumed.

"Anything but lost, my anxious friend," said Buffalo Bill. "Time spent in keeping out of a bad fight isn't wasted by any means. Do you know how many warriors there were in that gang?"

"A thousand, at least," said Overton.

"About a quarter as many, but they would have been too many for us, for they fight hard."

"But it seems as if we never would overtake those wretches that have the girls in their power," cried Overton.

"Yes, we will, and soon, too. They most likely had to take the brunt of the storm last night on the open plains. If they did they'll be half tuckered out, and they'll go slow to-day. If we don't overhaul them in camp to-night I'm not good on the guess."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TREACHERY.

Snap Carter, though appearing lost in thought, as they rode on that afternoon, was not only thinking of many things, but taking heed to what might at any time be expected from such a set of villains as those he now commanded—a plot to overthrow him. He had heard a few words dropped from Hunker Ben, and responded to by another, which opened his eyes, but, with his usual self-command, he had not shown the least sign, by look or demeanor, that he had felt any suspicion of them.

From the moment he got an inkling of intended treachery, there was not one second that he was not on the alert.

Seeming absorbed in thought, he did not even place the usual guards upon post, over the horses or about the camp, and the men, thinking that he believed the pursuit was given up, were glad to have it so. Yet he had a reason for it.

When Hunker Ben and his gang, for he had a gang who worked with him, held a talk that night, though his back was partly turned toward them, Snap Carter heard every word.

"Snap has grown spoony over them gals," said Hunker Ben. "Here we are, out on a two weeks' trip and not a dollar made—nigh onto twenty men gone under, and no chance ahead. Now I move we take the upper hand of Snap Carter, put him under the sod if he doesn't like it, and face off for the railroad, fix up all right in our Indian togs, run a train off, and sweep it of money and jewels. What do you say, boys?"

"I say it's O. K., and I'm for makin' you cap'n, besides," said one.

"And I, too," said another.

And nearly two-thirds of the gang expressed their assent.

"All right!" said Hunker Ben. "I'll do the square thing by you, but let me boss the whole job. We'll wait till he goes to sleep, or better yet, till moonrise. I'll put a man over him that will settle his hash."

"Then we'll do as we like. Hey?"

"That's the ticket!" was the cry, and then, after a low-toned conversation, the men separated.

Hunker Ben, seeing where Snap Carter stood, apparently lost in thought, approached him to satisfy himself if there was any suspicion in the leader's mind of what was going on.

Carter started, when the other spoke, and asked him what time of night it was.

"I should think it was about bedtime for me," said Ben, yawning, "that is if you don't want to me stand watch?"

"No. There's no need of it," said Carter. "All trail of us was washed out in the storm, and Buffalo Bill has most likely gone back. I shall take a look at the horses and then turn in."

"That suits," muttered Hunker Ben, as he walked off to the place where most of the men lay, on the other side of the main camp-fire.

Carter was gone a long time, so long that Hunker Ben began to feel uneasy, and was just going to look for him and see what he was doing when he came back and went into the willow thicket where he intended to sleep.

"It is all right now," said Hunker Ben. "He'll be asleep soon. Let Snap Carter drop to sleep. It shall be his last."

The men dropped down and all was still in camp.

The last thing which Susie Herbeson thought of when she closed her eyes in slumber was the strange and terrible expression on the face of Snap Carter, made very vivid by the gleam of the firelight falling upon it.

Susie woke, all trembling, from the effects of a bad dream.

Knowing that it was but a dream, and hearing Lottie breathing softly, she would not wake her, and soon she fell asleep again.

Later she woke, for a cold, wet hand was on her wrist.

"Hist!" said a voice. "Not a word—wake your sister and creep out into the stream from which I have crept to save you! My men are in revolt. Quick—all now depends on you. I have your horses and mine across the stream, where, unseen, we can mount and ride away. It is your only hope, and I swear by all my memory of good and my only hope of a hereafter, to save you or die."

"You are Snap Carter," whispered Lottie, seeming to realize the situation.

"I am that unhappy wretch, only asking, praying now to aid you and your sister."

"We will go. Heaven help you and us! We will go!" said Lottie in a whisper, and gently she woke her sister, whispered to her the danger and the promise of safety.

Without a word both sisters crept out from under the bough shelter on the side next the stream.

Snap Carter took each by the hand, and though the



water was waist deep and very, swift, he led them into and across it safely.

In silence they crept up the rocky bank, passed through thicket and mounted their horses just as the moon was seen rising above the trees.

At the same instant there was a terrible outcry in the camp which they had just left, shouts and curses, and louder than all the voice of Hunker Ben crying:

"They're gone. To horse—to horse!"

Then Snap Carter said to the girls, in a low tone:

"Follow me!"

And with their bridle reins fastened on either side to the head of his own horse he started forward at full speed.

In the same second fearful shouts and yells and the rapid discharge of firearms were heard in their rear.

Snap Carter did not pause one second after the girls were in their saddles, but rode off at terrible speed, heading more to the southward than before, following for some distance a stream that wound along near the base of and among the hills most of the time in the shallow water, not that he took time to study about hiding his trail, but because he thus kept cover of trees and bushes, not understanding the firing and yelling he heard far behind him, as he fled, to be anything but the mad action of his late associates, firing into the bushes where they supposed him hiding, and yelling out their hate with a wish to terrify the girls.

He knew that when followed, if overtaken, he might expect more mercy from the worst Indians on the plains than from Hunker Ben and his crowd.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### ON THE TRAIL AGAIN.

After leaving the Indian war party which had detained him so long the brave scout, Buffalo Bill, pushed his horses rapidly in the direction where the smoke had been seen, and a little before night reached the place where the desperadoes had made their long halt.

Here Overton found the pieces of silken scarf which Katie had purposely dropped. These he showed to Buffalo Bill as a proof that the girls were yet alive.

Overton carefully placed these relics by the side of the letter in the breast-pocket, and turned to Norfolk Ben, whom he had taken a great liking, and called for a good lunch that he had intrusted to that worthy.

Buffalo Bill made a short halt to refresh his party, for he felt sure that the others would camp at the gap in the hills ahead that night, and he meant to overtake them in his camp.

After he had lunched he called Dove Eye, Red Leaf, Texas Jack and Overton aside, and told them of his hopes and his plans.

Texas Jack was alone dubious.

"They had a long rest here," he said. "By the way the grass is cropped and trampled they stayed here fully half day. They'll not halt there."

He pointed to the hills, and then he added:

"They'll keep right on for the rendezvous of the gang Nick's Cavern."

"I don't believe it," said Cody. "They thought the moon had washed their trail so it could not be followed, they would not have lain here for hours. And, think-

ing that we've given up the chase, they'll camp as soon as they get to the hills. That is why I am taking it so cool now, for with a rest we can ride there in less than three hours, and I don't want to be seen till we are right in on top of them."

After leaving the valley, Buffalo Bill led his column leisurely until dark, for he did not wish to be seen from the hills.

When he was close up to the timber he called Red Leaf to him, and asked if he knew the lay of the land where they were.

The chief answered that he did, and then Buffalo Bill told him to creep up and scout the ground, and if the camp was there to return, and together they would plan the attack.

Red Leaf dismounted, as did all the rest of the party, red and white, to give their horses breath and strength for a charge, and the chief went forward swiftly on foot, followed at his own desire by Kionee the Creeper.

It was almost moonrise when he got back.

"Are they there?" asked Buffalo Bill, as Red Leaf came up where he stood.

"Yes, all. The two women sleep in a house made from bushes; the men are most all awake. The horses feed but a little way from camp. I have left Kionee there to scare them when we charge, so there may be no horses for the bad men to run away on. We will kill and scalp them all."

"Good! That talk suits me," said Texas Jack.

"You shall all have a chance," said Buffalo Bill.

Then he made Red Leaf detail the position of the camp and where the men were posted.

With Dove Eye on his left and Overton on his right—Red Leaf holding the post of honor in advance—Buffalo Bill walked his horses forward.

He did not mean to charge until the moment that discovery would be certain, but the moon began to rise above the trees a little sooner than he expected, and then, just as a glimmer of the camp-fire met his eyes, he heard a confused noise in the camp.

Without a word, at a motion of the hand of Buffalo Bill, Red Leaf led the way at fearful speed, and the whole party dashed in upon the desperadoes, who, with fresh fuel heaped high on the camp-fire, and some with brands in their hands, were rushing about in confusion.

Shooting and yelling as they went in, Buffalo Bill and his party dashed upon the astonished wretches, who resisted more from habit than any thought of victory, for it was more like a massacre than a battle.

At the first sound and shot Kionee the Creeper, with shrill yells, had stampeded all the stock, so that the ruffians had no horses to get away on, and now those who could not get temporary hiding-places in the bushes, or between the banks of the stream, were ridden down, speared or shot by Indians or scouts with as little mercy as if they had been wild beasts.

The surprise was complete, the attack so sudden, so overpowering, that while only a few of the attacking party were wounded, and not one killed, two-thirds of the desperadoes were slain or helplessly wounded, while the rest were scattered in concealment or flight.

The moon rose higher and higher, and shriek after



shriek from some 'discovered' wretch told that the pursuit was relentless, the punishment speedy.

Mr. Overton, dropping Hunker Ben with a mortal wound, rushed to the bough-house from which the disappointed ruffian was emerging when he shot him, but the girls had gone.

"If all that ruffian band only a few wounded wretches lived, and these, when questioned, though threatened with instant death if they did not speak the truth, could not or would not say what had become of the girls.

"I'm dyin', and I know it!" groaned Hunker Ben. "There's no use for me to live. We chaps had made up our minds to kill off Snap Carter, our captain, since Bill Deekin was killed. We were to do it at moonrise, and just then you charged and we're gone under!"

A wide circle, taking in the country for at least two miles around the late scene of conflict, was made by the scout and his companions, while Red Leaf and his Indians finished the punishment and took the scalps of those who by their crimes had forfeited all claim to mercy.

Buffalo Bill had crossed the stream, and was entering a pass to go around a hill that was in their way, when he saw where a stone, moss-covered on one side, had been broken and partially turned over in a little brook that ran through this pass.

He examined the mark very closely and then rode on, with his eyes following the water-course.

"Mounted parties have followed up this stream, to hide their trail in the water," he said, as he rode on faster, to find some point where the tracks could be seen plainer.

For miles they rode, and the trail was so well hidden by the running water that even Buffalo Bill could only here and there detect that a horse or horses had passed.

Then they came to a spot where a rock had caved freshly from the bank in the late storm, filling the channel, and here the riders had to leave the water.

Then with a cry of joy Buffalo Bill pointed out to Overton the tracks of three horses, side by side, close together.

"The man and the girls have passed here," said the scout.

"Let us overtake them," cried Overton.

"They have at least four or five hours' start," said the scout. "We will, as soon as our people are rallied and our horses have fed, take this trail, but we must follow it with care, for this Snap Carter has been long on the plains, and is an old hand at evading pursuit. I'll do my level best to overtake him as soon as I can, but we have wiped out the worst of the wretches, and we can take it a little easier. He seems to have treated the girls so well so far that the crowd got down on him, and meant to kill him. He got wind of it, and got away. So you see there doesn't seem to be any immediate danger."

Buffalo Bill turned his horse and rode back, saying, as he went:

"In two hours I'll take the trail, and keep it till we find the girls."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### HORSE-THIEVES AT WORK.

When he reached the sight of the desperadoes' camp and called his men together, Buffalo Bill was rather surprised to see Red Leaf bringing in a prisoner, for he had

not told the Indians to spare any of these bad men; neither had he ordered their extermination.

"This pale-face asked me in the name of the Great Spirit to take him before Long Rifle, and said that if he spoke to him he was willing to die," said Red Leaf.

The man whom he thus led forward was bold, almost defiant in his look, and did not seem to fear the fate which had fallen upon his late companions.

"What do you want of me?" asked Buffalo Bill sternly.

"I want about five minutes' time to talk to you, then the decency of being shot by a white man, instead of being killed and scalped by a red. I've washed all paint off, you see, and I want to die white."

"The request is reasonable enough. What else do you want to say to me?"

"To tell you something you'd never know but for me. Two men besides Snap Carter have got away. The cowardly cusses run at the first yelp they heard, and they away up in the hills long before this."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"Partly for spite, and partly because it is no use to keep it back. They know all the signals, and if you see fires burning, or lights flashing from any peaks to-night you'll believe what I say."

"Whom can they signal to?"

"About two hundred just such as these that you have wiped out. And there's a lot of Utes and some Cheyenne Dog Soldiers linked with them. When you know who you are and how many there are of you, they'll be looking for revenge. And I reckon they'll get it. Now you'll let one of your scouts put a hole through my horse, or heart, or do it yourself, which I'd like better—sail, I've said my say and I'm ready to go."

Buffalo Bill laid his hand on the butt of his revolver, half drew it from the belt, and fixed his eye on the man's face.

There was not a sign of fear in it. He was as cool as the scout himself.

"What's your name?" asked Buffalo Bill, for while he watched the man's face there seemed to be something in his expression which recalled a memory.

"Steve Hathaway," said the man, coolly.

"You rode the pony express through Bridger's Gap two seasons, didn't you?"

"I did," said Hathaway.

"Yes! You had your pony shot, but you saved mail and carried it in with two arrows sticking in the back and one in your shoulder."

"Yes, who told you of it?" said the man, surprised.

"No matter. You were a better man then than you are now. But for that one brave, good act your life is spared now. Take one of those rifles from the ground, a bullet bag and a powder-horn, so you won't starve, and go."

"I'd rather not. I'm in for a bad life, I can't lead any other, and now you've got me, you'd better snuff me out."

"I'm no stranger to you, Steve Hathaway," said the scout. "I'm Little Bill, that you fished out of the Salt Water, when I was driving ox team in the same way as train when we carried stores for General Johnson's army up in Utah. Do you remember that?"

"I reckon I do; there was a powerful sight of ice in the drink that day. But that was long ago. I've



gh since to be hung for a dozen times if the vigils had caught me. So let drive, Bill, for now I know let drive, and do it quick, for I wish to die, and I want to have these reds see me kick."

"I tell you again you are free," said Buffalo Bill. "I didn't hurt a hair of your head now for all the gold in the Peak."

The man stood and seemed to think a minute, then "Well, I'll take the life you give me. Let me have a horse and I'll go over the mountains, or some place where I can try work that is honest, just to see if I can pay you. I don't go to them that I've been with, that's sure."

"Pick out your own horse, saddle, and blankets, and then," said Bill. "And be quick, for I've a trail to the west." "If it leads to Nick's Cavern don't take it," said Hathaway, "for that is headquarters for the band, and there's a party of Ute Indians that have been camped close by for three months or more that are friendly with them, and will fight for them."

"Is this the truth, Steve Hathaway?"

"It is. I don't feel like lying when it can't do me any harm."

"If you'd do me a favor I might put you in the way of getting a better life," said Buffalo Bill.

"What is it, and how can I ever lead a better life, hard as I am?" asked the desperado.

"You used to be the best express rider in the country. I expect you are as good yet. If you will go to Fort Harker with a letter from me and then guide some of my men back to help me, I'll get you employed as an army scout, and those who can do it will have the President pardon all your past crimes. He can do it, for you've kept them outside of State lines."

Hathaway stood and reflected long before he answered. "I'll do it," he said.

"I only could live honest as I was living when we were on the Sweet Water, and could forget what I have done. I believe I'd be happy. As to turning on them I've been with, it is only what they'd do on me. So I don't care for that. There is no honor among thieves, and I don't care for it. Bill, I'll take your letter, and if the commandant wants me I can't complain."

"I will not harm you, but will trust you when he writes the letter I will write. Kionee, give me this haversack full of dried meat. Pick two of the best horses in the lot—I mean from your lot, Steve, for they are rested and fresh. You know the route as well as I do. Ride as fast as you can, and I shall follow Snap Carter's trail and make it easy. You'll find my trail here when you come up with the troops, as I know you will come."

The released prisoner at once made his preparations. He was in the saddle, his led horse by his side, and ready to start. In the meantime Buffalo Bill had written and sent his letters.

The day was well advanced when Buffalo Bill once again took the trail of Snap Carter and the two girls.

He rode on till dark, and camped in a well-sheltered place in the hills, with good grass and water near by for the animals.

Overton took the delay hard, for he was an amateur in such work.

A little after midnight there was an alarm in camp, but it soon subsided.

It was caused by the approach of Red Leaf and his three warriors.

The chief had two fresh scalps upon his spear. He pointed to these when he approached Buffalo Bill, and that was all the report that he made.

The scout knew that no signal fires would be lighted on the hill-tops that night. So he returned to his blankets to sleep.

At early dawn they were again in motion, and soon destined to a surprise.

Instead of keeping to the hills, Snap Carter, after passing beyond this spur, took a short turn east, and headed away toward what Buffalo Bill said would be the hills at the head of the Loup.

The Indian, one of the six sent before, came back to tell Buffalo Bill and Red Leaf that the trail of the three horses, after striking directly east had come upon the tracks of a large body of Indian ponies going south, and had made for the hills again. To save the others a longer journey this runner had been sent back, so that the course of the three horses might be intercepted quicker by keeping along the base of the hills.

At nightfall the trail of the three horses was found again, and, just as it was found, the Indian runners, who had taken a much longer route, came to the main column.

Buffalo Bill told Red Leaf to bid his men rest till morning, for, now that they were in the hills, most likely Snap Carter would not press his speed as he had done.

In truth, he felt almost sure that a slender column of smoke, seen for a little while in the hills south of them, and not very far off, was made by a fire lighted by Carter.

But could he have traversed that space, and known what terrible peril now darkened above those helpless girls, neither he nor a man in his party would have remained an instant where they were.

Buffalo Bill was too old a scout to build a fire without an actual necessity, and not having coffee to boil or meat to cook that night, he merely posted his sentinels, and then those not on guard dropped to sleep.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CARTER SURPRISED.

For all the first day Snap Carter and the two sisters traveled in comparative comfort, though fast, and when they halted or camped, the man was as attentive and kind as a brother could be, yet respectful as a servant in words and manner. He seemed to have thrown aside all his former insolent bravado; to have dropped his coarse, rude language; to have changed in every way.

The very fact that the girls now trusted to him, depended on his manhood, had much to do with this.

On the second day he told them, after they had journeyed some distance along the hill route, that he was about to run a great risk—not for them, but for himself.

"I am known in every railroad town," he said; "a reward has been offered for me, dead or alive, but I shall take you to some point where you can be placed on a train that will take you to the bounds of civilization. If your father lives, you will hear from him and find him."



When once you are safe, I care not what becomes of me. Bad as I have been I am an outlaw forever, and can never hope to be otherwise; but there is room in the wilderness even to live without doing more evil, and room to die when my time comes."

Soon after saying this, he turned from the hills and urged the horses forward swiftly.

The sisters, though tired, buoyed up now with hope, forbore to utter a word of complaint.

Suddenly Carter halted, turned pale, and while he pointed down, he said:

"We must yet keep to the hills. A large body of Indians have just passed here, whether on the war-path or for a grand hunt, I cannot tell. They, too, bend for the timber where I hoped to find our first rest and shelter. I dare not go on. I can at least care for you and conceal you better in the hills till I can take some safer route."

The girls, terrified when they saw his alarm, were willing to go where he thought it would be safest, so his trail was at once changed.

Then only did he realize how he had overtaxed the strength of the sisters by that long, swift ride, for much excited all day, he had given less than usual attention to their looks.

Susie fell in a dead faint when he lifted her from the saddle, and Lottie had hardly strength to assist in restoring her to consciousness.

Alarmed, thoughtless of the peril, Carter quickly lighted a fire, and in his tin cup boiled some water and made tea from a little store in his haversack; then he caught some trout from a stream which ran by the camp, and broiled them on the coals.

For he knew that hunger as well as exhaustion was the cause of such weakness.

When they had supped and drank some of his strong tea, the girls felt better, and yet they were only too glad when he arranged a bed for them under a leafy pine.

By this time night had fairly set in, and thinking that he must be safe at least now from pursuit, he believed he could himself take a little rest, for never did he need it more.

After seeing once more that the horses were well secured and feeding quietly, he returned to the camp, and selecting a spot near the tree beneath which the girls were sleeping, he lay down, his weapons all belted to his side and his rifle in his hands.

Light was breaking when Snap Carter was awakened.

In a second his left hand grasped the hilt of his heavy bowie knife, and it was drawn at the instant he opened his eyes, and with an upward sweep he drove it home into the huge Indian warrior who was bending over to secure his arms, while another was finishing the same task at his legs.

A yell broke from the lips of the Indian, and in a second it was answered by a dozen more, while Carter bravely struck out at the second warrior, and tried to rise, for he was clenched by the first Indian in the death grasp.

The struggle was fierce but short, for though he fought desperately, killing one and wounding the other Indian, there were more upon him in a second, and a crushing blow from a hatchet dropped him powerless to the earth, while with fiendish ferocity the Indian whom he had

wounded by his second blow tore the knife from his less hand and drove it again and again into his body.

All this was seen by the horror-stricken girls, wakened by the terrific yells, found themselves rounded by a band of painted and savage Indians, were yelling madly over their dead comrade and wounded mate, while Carter lay gasping, dying before their eyes.

Too much terrified to speak, utterly helpless, the girls expected every second that the death blows would also fall on them. And they had heard such terrible tales of Indian atrocity that they would not have shied for a second from leveled gun or descending knife or hatchet.

An Indian, who by dress and looks seemed superior to the rest, said, speaking in broken English:

"Keep still. Me no kill women. Paleface squaw keep still. Eat, quick—have big ride all soon."

Then food was offered to them.

But not even to satisfy the savages would they swallow a morsel of the half-cooked meat tendered by their captors. They were, in truth, so shocked by the sight of Carter's mangled body, so terrified as they looked on the savage, merciless faces around them, that they were dead than alive.

They saw the arms which Carter wore taken and distributed among his captors, and then the horses were brought up, their own and quite a large band more, and their captors seemed to own.

The girls were again placed in their saddles, a little after sunrise the Indian cavalcade, heading in front, across the plains, dashed away at a gallop.

Soon after they left the hills Lottie saw the Indians looking back, talking in their own tongue, and seemingly showing triumphant joy in their looks. Looking back for the reason of their looks and actions, she felt sure that she saw a body of men in the timber at the edge of the hills, but they were not mounted.

Then the thought came to her that these Indians had robbed that party of their horses, and thus rendered their suit hopeless, for there were more in the hills in the end than there were Indians in the band of their captors.

These were only about a dozen in number, stout, warlike warriors under the leadership of an elder brave.

"Where do you go? Why do you run away from your enemies?" asked Lottie of this Indian, for an intense feeling told her the men seen in the hills were those who had been trying to save her and her sister.

"Keep still. Women know nothing. By and by I will heap more warriors. Then me go back and get their scalps. Only one now."

The wretch dangled Carter's scalp before her and pointed his spear point.

And the Indian turned to look back again toward the hills.

Lottie looked, too, and she was almost sure, for they were not so far off, that she saw a body of men heading from the hills in the same direction that the Indians were going.

But she did not speak of it even to her sister. For the party had no horses, how could they ever overtake the savages who had?



## CHAPTER XXVII.

## HIS LAST WORDS.

In the gray of the coming day the march was taken, and leaving the slowest to follow at their best pace, Red Leaf and his braves, with Buffalo Bill, went on at a

When Buffalo Bill and Red Leaf, side by side, approached the foot of the hill where they had seen the smoke the night before, they saw on the plains to the east a large band of horses moving, and some mounted Indians with them, but their attention was, a moment later, attracted by another sight directly before them.

A wounded man, scalped and dreadfully cut up, had crawled to the brink of a small stream, to either wash his hands or drink, and now he tried to rise when he heard their steps, but he could not. He fell back, helpless, and fast dying.

Buffalo Bill saw that he was white, and, rushing up, knelt out:

"Who are you, man? How did this come about?"

"I'm all that's left of Snap Carter. Don't bother for me, but try to save them girls. I was doin' my level best to get 'em back safe, but the reds took me onawares, and I'm about done for."

The man dropped back, and Bill thought he was dead.

"You've been kind to those girls?" asked Bill, when he saw the man's eyes open again.

"Then go—go, and save—oh, my sister—mother——"

With another quivering gasp, Snap Carter died.

Buffalo Bill laid the head tenderly down on the mossy bank of the stream.

"A fellow who thinks of his mother and sister when he's dying can't be all bad," he said. "Snap Carter, you're a brave, and I've heard a heap about the evil you've fought, but I'll see you buried decently. What tribe, Red Leaf?"

The last question was addressed to the Sioux chief, who had just discovered the body of the Indian that Snap Carter had killed, hidden under a pile of brush which the warriors had thrown over it before they rode away.

"Dog!—soldier! Ute!" said Red Leaf. "Big horse-killer—I know him! The paleface killed him."

When Overton, Dove Eye, and the scouts who were behind under Texas Jack came up, they found Buffalo Bill alone, sitting by the side of the dead white man.

Overton asked:

"Where are the girls? Weren't they here?"

"Yes, but they are gone again, and in worse hands than before. The Ute Indians have them now. This brave man died trying to save them. He was alive when I got him, but died a little while ago."

"Alive! cut up and scalped so?"

"Kionee, there's another scalp for you!" said Buffalo Bill, as the young Sioux strode up, carrying the blankets which he had kept for Dove Eye to sleep upon.

"Kionee will only take the scalps of them that he kills," said the young Indian, proudly. "Let the Ute dog wear my scalp."

"You're gettin' more particular than most of your braves!" muttered Texas Jack.

Then the scouts all went to work soon after, and, beneath the hill where the two girls had been sleeping, Carter was buried.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A FIGHT AHEAD.

During the day Buffalo Bill killed a couple of deer, so there was no dearth of meat in the camp, and some was cooked to carry along when the horses had rested.

As the trail now taken seemed to lead back at an angle but a short distance from the old course, the scout detached two of his hunters to strike the one by which Steve Hathaway would be apt to bring the troops.

The ride in toward the hills was unmarked by any incident, but again Buffalo Bill had to camp without seeing the Indians or their captives.

He had now to move warily. He knew that he was in a very bad country, liable to ambuscade, and he had to keep red and white scouts ahead and on either flank of his little party all the time.

Mounted once more, all were in better trim, and even Overton, with a blanket instead of a quilted saddle, said he enjoyed the ride.

Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack found signs at the noon stopping place, on the second day after they had got their horses that would have alarmed any other class of men and made most leaders turn back at once.

The body of Indians whom they had trailed was joined by another even larger than the first, and it now must number, at the very least calculation, a hundred men, and perhaps double that number.

Buffalo Bill, as brave as the bravest, looked dubious when he saw this, but Texas Jack said:

"If we have half a show, we can lay 'em out."

Keeping warily on, Buffalo Bill became convinced that he would soon overtake the reds, for the trail freshened so fast that he knew they were traveling very slowly.

Suddenly he came to a pass in the hills, which intersected that by which they were traveling, and here they had another and not a pleasant surprise.

Another party of Indians had united with the main body, still swelling its ranks, and now all of them had suddenly faced east again by the new pass, and were heading once more toward the distant plains.

And what was more, they were very near. They could not be more than two hours ahead, for the meat they had cooked and half eaten seemed hardly cold.

"We'll have a fight before we're much older!" said Buffalo Bill, as with scouts and flankers well thrown out, he moved on again.

"Let it come! I'd like a change of some kind," said Overton, quietly.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE FIGHT.

Lottie and Susie had been now three days in the power of the Indians, and so far, though closely watched and guarded, they had not been treated rudely. The chief seemed to have complete control over his braves, and band after band joined him in answer to scouts sent out or signal smokes. He soon had a very large party.

"Now!" he cried, "the paleface girls shall see how Ute warriors can fight. The Snakes are seeking us, and they will find us soon enough."

He pointed away to a plain at the foot of the hillslope where they were, and the girls saw that a large band of



Meinhold and Texas Jack rode up, thus making the conferring powers equal, at least in numbers.

"Where are the two white captives—young women, who were in your possession?" asked the captain, sternly.

The chief glanced off quickly toward the base of the cliff, where Overton had declared he saw the women, and a look of pleasure lighted his face, for till now he supposed that the girls had been recaptured.

"Why does the paleface chief ask?" he said, now ready to gain time, for he believed his braves left in charge of them had been crafty enough to retreat with them.

"Because he has a right. The father of these girls mourns for them in his lodge far away. And they must go back to him or not a red man shall live to say he has seen them. Where are they? I want them!"

"Marmora is a great chief—he is King of the Watsatch."

"Marmora, if that is your name, will be a head less in height very soon if he does not give me a straight answer. Where are the girls?" cried the captain, angrily. "Speak—or I tear down that flag, and my troops will ride you down."

"Marmora, before the battle, sent them away out of danger," said the chief, glancing toward the spot where they had been left.

"Alone?" asked Buffalo Bill, who had detected the look.

"No; with four braves to guard them from hurt."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE TRAIL NOT ENDED.

"Jack, ride over to the cliff. Call a half-dozen men as you go!" cried Buffalo Bill, nervously. "Mr. Overton said that he saw women there. He went only with Norfolk Ben in company, and they two know nothing about Indians. Go quick, for I feel uneasy."

Marmora saw with alarm that the cavalry, evidently impatient, were remounting their horses.

"We will talk!" he said. "We do not want to fight palefaces. You have good guns that shoot a great many times, and we do not want to lose many men for two women. You may take them."

"Then send one of your braves back with orders for your people to stay where they are, and go with us up to get the girls. My people shall not move unless yours do."

Marmora had a struggle with his pride to do this, but he knew what well-armed white troops could do, so he rode on toward the cliff with the captain and Buffalo Bill.

Texas Jack and his men were there, seeking rapidly from rock to rock the marks which might lead to the discovery of the girls. Four dead Indians, unscalped, pierced by rifle balls, lay on the ground.

These were seen when Captain Meinhold, Buffalo Bill and the Ute chief rode up.

"Who has killed these braves? They were the guards I left with the women," said Marmora.

"Overton and Ben must have done it," said Buffalo Bill. "Were they not at our lines?"

He asked the last question of Texas Jack.

"No. The last seen of them was on that cliff, after they got your permission to ride over here in search."

"These men are cold. They have been dead a good

while. They were killed before we came near the ground," added Texas Jack.

Marmora, whose looks spoke his indignation, said: "The palefaces speak with a double tongue. My braves have been killed with big bullets such as the palefaces use. They ask me for the girls after they have killed their guards and taken them."

"It is not so," said Captain Meinhold. "Your braves were not killed by our men; neither have any of them the girls."

"It looks very dark; I cannot see the way clear," said Marmora. "My braves are killed by white men, and I do not take scalps; the women are gone—who did it?"

Buffalo Bill, who had joined Texas Jack in the hunt, now cried out:

"There have been men here who don't belong to the crowd—white men, too. They wore moccasins, and my crowd wear boots—so do the soldiers of the cavalry. Those men came down the hill in the water, and shot the braves from behind the rocks. Their tracks tell the story."

"Where, then, is Overton and the negro you spoke of?" cried the captain.

"They must be on the trail of the men who carried the girls, for beyond here I see no tracks of them," said Texas Jack.

"To the top of the cliff, some of you, quick. That is where Overton said he saw them!" cried Buffalo Bill.

Texas Jack and his scouts, by different routes, hurried to reach the indicated spot.

Those who followed the bed of the little stream found there first. Texas Jack was not among these, but he was not far behind the rest.

His report was quickly made. In one spot, where the sand had blown into a gully, there were the tracks of the girls, of men in moccasins, and over these the small deer boot-mark made by Overton, and the broader track of Ben's brogan.

Just beyond this strip of sand there was a sudden change—a kind of channel between two cliffs—and the tracks were lost, for it was hard, solid rock in the direction for quite a long distance.

"The girls have been taken by white men who killed their guards," said Buffalo Bill.

"Then they must be followed. But it is singular that Overton and the man who went with him have not returned. Surely he would not be so rash as to follow the trail alone?" said Captain Meinhold, who had come up with Marmora.

"There is no trail here to find," said Texas Jack. "If he has followed them he has either seen them or gone a blind."

"We've got to find out. I wouldn't have him hurt ten times his weight in gold!" cried Buffalo Bill. "Captain, you can settle the truce with the Ute chief, I want to hunt up Overton and those girls."

"There is nothing to settle," said Marmora, grudgingly. "I have had a big fight, and have killed many men. I have lost a great many men. My brother is among them. I don't want to lose any more. The palefaces came their way in peace, and I will go mine in the same way they will let me."

"We have no war with you," said Captain Meinhold.



"Only when the red man raises the hatchet to strike us do we strike back."

"It is well. Marmora will bury his dead, and then he will go back over the mountains, for there will be great mourning in all his villages. But we have many scalps to carry back."

The chief rode away, and then Captain Meinhold joined Buffalo Bill again.

The latter had just returned from an unavailing search for the trail of Overton and the others, but Texas Jack and his scouts were still looking for it.

"I'm afraid Overton has met bad luck or we should see or hear from him," said Buffalo Bill. "Brave and fearless, he has hurried on, and perhaps been shot down by the wretches who have now got those unfortunate girls. I dread to keep on looking, lest I should find his body."

A shout from Texas Jack, who was seen hurrying back, told them that he had news of some kind for them.

"I've found where they took their horses," he said. "There is a pretty strong party, for some stayed back."

"Have you seen any sign of Overton?" asked Buffalo Bill, eagerly.

"Yes; he and Norfolk Ben have been taken and carried along. Their tracks are plain where the horses were kept."

"It is strange they were not killed on the spot. But we must take the trail at once—that is if Captain Meinhold will do it."

"Of course," said the brave officer. "I came to get you out of a scrape, if you were in it, and I shall see you through."

"Thank you, captain; I shall never forget you."

"We'll all try to keep together," said the captain.

"They cannot have much start, and we surely can overtake them."

"Some of us can," said Buffalo Bill.

The captain now sent back orders for the troops to ride around where the trail could be taken, and then went with Buffalo Bill.

There were tracks where a large band of horses had stood for some time, for the ground was all trodden up, and then, on the thus softened ground, the tracks of men could be seen.

Among these the keen eye of Buffalo Bill soon detected the boot-marks made by Overton, the brogan-tracks of Ben, and in one place the tiny impression of the girls' feet.

"We are on the trail of all of 'em now, sure," he said.

"Bill Harkness leads the band," said Steve Hathaway.

"Do you see that big track? His foot is the biggest in the gang."

"I'll soon have the measure of it," said Buffalo Bill, springing upon his horse.

"Be a little easy, and you, too, captain, and listen to me, for I may help you now more than you dream. These chaps are strong and have a big backin', and they can lay for you in a dozen places betwixt here and Nick's Cavern, where they quarter."

"Let them lay, Steve. We'll lay them out," said Buffalo Bill, spurring on.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## A FAMILIAR VOICE.

So sure was Overton that he had seen the girls that he was determined to satisfy himself on the point, and he never dreamed or even took time to think of the danger which might confront him in the attempt.

The route which he and his volunteer aid, Norfolk Ben, took to reach the top of the cliff did not lead them by the bodies of the Ute braves, or the New Yorker might have got a shadow of the peril he was walking into so blindly.

They rode to where the ridge seemed most accessible on horseback and attempted to ride up, but they found it too steep for the horses and hurried up on foot.

They soon reached the crest of the cliff, and not seeing anyone there, Overton went on a little way and shouted. For he thought if the girls were near they would answer. He thought he heard an answering cry a little way on, and pushed forward.

"Marse Oberton, I wouldn't go dar out o' sight ob de odders," said the thoughtful Ben. "I 'clar to goodness I wouldn't. You dunno what dere is among dem rocks. Maybe pant'ers, maybe wolves."

There were wolves, but they were in human shape, and Overton soon found them, as he hurried on despite Ben's entreaties, followed, however, by the faithful fellow, who was willing to share the danger if he could not get Overton to shun it.

Just where a small chasm opened between the rocks Overton stepped in to see if there was any sign of the girls there, when he was confronted by a half-dozen men with leveled guns, while Ben cried out from behind

"Look out, Marse Oberton, dere's men wid shootin' irons ahind us."

Sure enough, they were surrounded, and a man gigantic in stature, with all but nose and eyes hidden in a black, bushy beard, cried out

"Stranger—you've put your foot into a trap. If you've got any prayin' to do—do it quick and then shell out."

"It might pay you better to let us alone," said Overton.

"I can't see it. Boys, knock the nigger in the head—he isn't any good, standin' there."

"Don't, Marse Whiteman—don't."

"An' it's no use a killin' such a good cook an' servant as I is. 'Fore de war I'd have brung a heap o' money—you bet I would."

A laugh showed that Ben's appeal had put their captors in something like a better humor.

"Maybe he has got more boodle that could be reached. Let's keep him till we see," said one of the men.

"Well—I'm agreed," said the first. "We can make use of the nigger anyway when we get to the cave. He says he can cook."

"I jess kin dat, Marse Whiteman!"

"Well, move on—move on. We've not long to stay around here, for some of your gang may be on our trail."

The next instant a cry of surprise left the lips of Overton, and one of real joy broke from Ben.

Two young girls, very pale, but even with tangled hair and garments covered with dust, very beautiful, stood near some horses, guarded by three or four armed men.

"Oh, de goodness!" cried Ben, breaking away from all restraint and rushing up to the girls, whose hands he seized and kissed, while he actually wept for gladness to



see them alive. "Oh, Missee Susie an' Miss Lottie. Jes' to think I'm wid you once more. Ole Ben is jes' ready to go now when Gabriel blows his horn—he is dat. Oh, honeys, is it you—all sure alive?"

"The darky knows you?" said the leader of the band.

"Yes," said Lottie. "He was my father's servant."

"Yes—I is his servant, and yours, too, Miss Lottie. Your old fadder is alive, and he'd jes' gib a hundred toutsan' dollar to see you and Missee Susie once more."

"A hundred thousand dollars—do you know what you are saying, darky?" asked the leader of the band, while the rest talked among themselves.

"Yes, Marse Whiteman—I jes' do know what I'm sayin'. An' her old man has done got it, all in greenbacks, to buy and stock his farm out whar he was gwine."

"Where is he now?"

"Back wid de wagons, where he was hurt when dese leddies was took from him. He's dar sure, and so is de money, an' I know he'd give it all to see dese 'ere back safe to him."

"Does that negro speak the truth?" asked the leader, sternly, of Overton.

"I believe he does," said the latter, who had hardly let his eyes move from the face of Lottie all this time. If there is any doubt about Mr. Herbeson, the father of these ladies, having money, I know who has to see them restored to him."

"You mean yourself, I suppose?"

"For such a purpose I can command money."

"Hum! Why don't you bargain for your own life?"

"Because I would rather buy their safety than my own. I am young, single, and—not afraid of death."

"Well, you take things pretty cool. The things you wear prove you are rich. What do you say, boys—shall we take 'em all on to the cave and hold 'em to ransom? We can make more by that than we can lookin' for horses."

"Ay—ay—take 'em to the cave," cried the rest.

"And hurry up. There's a big lot of men down below the cliff, and they aren't in that Indian fight," said a man who came up at that moment.

"Mount at once—we were lucky to have spare horses," said the leader. "Mount and away."

Then turning to Overton, he said:

"Stranger—if you'll act square we'll treat you well. If you don't you'll die without havin' time to pray."

"Treat them well, and you shall have every dollar I have in the world," said Overton, glancing at the girls.

"They shall be treated well if we're sure of being paid well," said the other.

Now they were all mounted, and moving off up among the rugged hills at a sweeping trot increased to a gallop where the route was better.

Overton now had a chance to look at the party, for he and the girls were placed in the center, Ben following close behind.

There seemed to be in all about twenty-five or thirty men, all well armed, but wearing a wicked, wild look, such as might be expected in outlawed men.

For a time they thus kept on in silence, the trail being through a wild country, which Overton would have admired under any other circumstances.

He was pondering what to do when one of the rear

guard thundered by him and rode to the front. After spoke to the leader the pace was increased to a swift gallop, and then the leader dropped back alongside Overton.

"Young man," said he, "I've a few questions to H and if you don't answer them straight we'll not be about that ransom. What party were you with when that had been sent for—expecting them every hour," replied Overton.

"A party of scouts commanded by Buffalo Bill, th some Sioux Indians, eighteen or twenty, under Chief Leaf."

"Were there no troops—cavalry—in the party?"

"None when I left; but they were expecting some that had been sent for—expecting them every hour," replied Overton.

"Young man, I am satisfied that you have told truth, and now I'll tell you some news. These sc Indians, and cavalry men are on our trail; and you not think it'll help your case much, for I'd drop ve Indian fashion, with a bullet, before I'd lose you. Y see them the worst whipped crowd in about half an ley that you ever heard of. We'll be then where their C alry will have as much play as a horse in a hencoop. e keep cool, remain quiet, without an effort to escape, T you and the girls are safe. Remember—a sign that lad like getting away draws lead for your heart."

Overton knew that every word the man spoke meant, and that an attempt to escape would be litem hopeless.

The full speed of the horses was kept up now for eral miles, and they seemed to have left pursuit behd when they suddenly rode into a cañon so deep and ot that it seemed like twilight when they got in.

The leader here checked the speed a little, and Over saw the girls go just before him, and then he follo just as a rifle-shot and a loud, ringing shout reached ears.

Only too well did he know the ring of the "long-ra rifle" and the sound of Buffalo Bill's voice.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### NICK'S CAVERN.

Overton glanced back as he heard the rifle-shot battle-shout of Buffalo Bill, and he saw the last mag the party, who rode just to the rear of where the ler sat in his saddle, reel and fall from his horse.

At the same instant he saw the leader spur on into narrow pass, bringing up the rear, while by some w trivance, which Overton did not understand, detach huge mass of rock, which completely blocked up the p so that pursuit till this was cleared away was hopeless.

Not being able to stop, had he even desired to do Overton had to keep with the rest a little further, then he found himself in what he had heard so m about—the far-famed "Nick's Cavern."

It was an immense cleft beneath the mountain n which seemed to have been hollowed out by a riva fire, so red, lava-like were the curious and fantastic w The main cave was large enough for a regiment to b manœuvred in, while away off into the mountain dark halls and avenues—how far none but those were used to the secrets knew.

But Overton had no time to see more than that



ady there was quite a large party of men there, and  
ent there were fires burning, which had served to light  
t e vast palace.

le A thundering cheer greeted the arrival of the leader,  
om Overton now heard addressed as Bill Harkness.

His answer was a shrill whistle-call, which brought  
otery man from inside to where he was seated.

Men!" he shouted, "we've been followed close by  
outs, Indians, and cavalry. I've dropped the cliff-rock  
their path, but they'll try to get us out of here. I've  
t a dozen men at the pass—the next thing to do is to  
the range above with our best shots and clean them  
it. So up and away, about forty of you, and take care  
things there. As soon as I and my crowd have had a  
te to eat I'll go up and look to things myself."

The only reply was a general cheer, and Overton saw  
le men, all armed, scattering away to obey orders.

"Whom have you here, Bill?" asked a man who looked  
as rough as Harkness, approaching the spot where  
yerton, the two girls, and Norfolk Ben were standing.

"Prisoners, to be well treated for the present, without  
hey try to get away."

Overton made up his mind to remain near the girls all  
e time.

The longer he looked at Lottie the more he liked her,  
and he now had a chance to say a few words of comfort  
to her and her sister. The ruffian, Harkness, did not  
seem to like this, for, calling a stout, red-faced woman to  
him, he said:

"Here, Lize, you take them two gals to your corner  
ere, and keep 'em under your own eye. Feed 'em well,  
and treat 'em well, but don't let any man talk to or  
dothor 'em. Mind, now, and do as I say. Hold on—that  
igger there has been their servant and cook. He can  
wait on them and help you."

"Thank you, Marse Whiteman. De old lady'll jes' find  
ne handy."

"Who do you call old, you moke," cried Lize, angrily.

"Beg pardon, missus—I hadn't looked at you afore. I  
lar to goodness you is younger an' han'somer dan any  
ady I done see ebber since we left San Louis."

"That'll do," said Lize, completely mollified. "There's  
ishes to wash—tend to that and then get something to  
at for the young ladies."

Ben, only too glad to be near Susie and Lottie, went  
night to work, while Bill Harkness beckoned Overton to  
ain.

"Stranger," said he, "make yourself comfortable here  
ough this fire. After I've attended to them that have fol-  
owed us, I'll arrange that ransom business. It will take  
ome time, I suppose, for some one of us will have to go  
rior the money, but we'll make you comfortable as long as  
you keep quiet and take things easy. If those friends of  
ours push for a fight I must accommodate them."

"They're fighting now, are they not?" asked Overton.  
n I hear guns firing."

"Maybe they're wasting powder—for they couldn't do  
anything with us here—no, not if they tried for six  
months. We're walled in from the east, for I had all  
vaxed to tumble forty tons of rock into the trail. I meant  
to wait a little longer to wall some of them in, but the  
rap went too easy. West from here there's no opening  
that isn't guarded, and nothing can climb the cliffs on  
that side. So make your mind easy about them."

Overton could not. For he loved Buffalo Bill as well  
as a brother. And he feared that the brave scout would  
lose his life in trying to get to him.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### UNDER FIRE.

Steve Hathaway knew the country and the stronghold  
so well that he told Bill that if the ruffians got to the cave  
there would be no use trying to attack them, and no hope  
to drive them out, except by starvation, and that would  
be difficult, for they had plenty of provisions.

Disguising himself by throwing away his Indian coat  
and taking a jacket from a soldier, changing hats with  
Buffalo Bill, Steve now felt no fear of recognition from  
the band, and finding no words of his could restrain the  
scout from charging right on, he rode on with him, show-  
ing him short cuts to gain the others.

Thus it was that Buffalo Bill, in sight just before the  
band reached Nick's Cavern, got a shot with his long  
range rifle.

Steve, who knew the secret of the trap, and the peril if  
the rocks were sent tumbling down, dashed his horse for-  
ward at its maddest speed, and got the horse of Buffalo  
Bill by the rein just in time to rear him back on his  
haunches and save the heroic rider from being crushed by  
the terrible avalanche which now blocked the way.

"Steve, I owe my life to you a second time. I don't  
know how I'll ever pay the debt."

"Say no more about it. We're no more than \_\_\_\_\_  
The hounds are safe now. They're shut in and we're shut  
out."

"Is that trail entirely blocked?"

"Yes, entirely. They are all in Nick's Cavern, where  
there is feed for man and beast kept all the time. It is  
shut in every way now."

"Good! Then they can't get out?"

"No, but you can't get in."

"We'll see. They got in, and so will I."

"But they will get to the top of the cliff over us, and  
make it too hot for us here."

"Will they? Then we'll make it too hot for them there.  
If they can shoot at us, we can return the fire. If I see a  
gun flash lead will go very near where I see that flash."

"If you hurt any of them, they'll murder the prisoners."

"How are we to know they have not done that already?  
I tell you what it is, Steve, I've done fooling. I have not  
come this far to go back with my hands down, leaving  
them here to crow. They've got to be wiped out."

"It will be a hard old chance."

"Then I'm just in for it. Here comes Captain Mein-  
hold. What shall I tell him?"

"That you've holed your game, but diggin' for it in a  
rock will be hard work."

"Well, why don't we go on?" asked the captain, who  
had not been able to hold the wild pace that Bill had kept.

"Rocks caved in our way and the enemy walled in be-  
hind them," said Buffalo Bill.

"Can you see them?"

"No, sir; but I hear them," said Buffalo Bill, as a bul-  
let flattened against a rock within a foot of his head. "If  
you'll get under cover, sir, we'll talk with Steve here, and  
see what we can do."

"I don't like this," said the captain, as they fell back a



little where some rocks and trees sheltered them partially, for from away up in the cliff, out of sight of them, a fire was now opened which made it necessary for all hands to take cover.

Two wounded men, a scout and soldier, proclaimed this necessity.

"Is there any way of getting in and making a charge?" asked the captain. "Hand to hand, sabre and revolver. I'll risk meeting them, three to one!"

"Just about the odds, I reckon, captain, but the getting in is the question. There is a passage in and out, besides the one they've filled up, where a man can creep, but not where horses can go. But only Bill Harkness and two more know anything about it. It was always kept from the rest for fear of treachery at a time like this," said Hathaway.

"It can and must be found," said Buffalo Bill. "I'm going to look for it."

Buffalo Bill started out, determined to climb the cliff. But the instant he was seen near the face of the rock, bullets "rained" at him. That Providence, which seems ever to shelter and protect the bravest, when cowards fall, must have shielded his breast, for he was evidently a target for at least twenty marksmen.

Coolly he dropped back.

"Climbin' just now, in the face of a leaden hailstorm, isn't in my line."

The scout crept from rock to rock under the bushes for some little time, while the scouts and soldiers kept the men above occupied, for the former fired every time they saw a gun flash.

But this shooting was entirely at random, and there was no certainty of their hitting a man.

The firing was still kept up, though it was now quite dark, but apparently to no effect, but to show that powder was plenty on both sides.

And while the firing was kept up in the front Buffalo Bill, guided by Steve Hathaway, went on a scout to find the secret entrance to the cavern.

Within an hour the two returned and said:

"We have them now, captain, for sure."

"Leave half-a-dozen men here to keep up a show of attack, and the rest of us will soon be in the cave."

It was no idle boast, for the reserves, soldiers, scouts and Indians were soon in the rear of the cavern and with a rush were upon the surprised outlaws.

The fight that followed was a hand-to-hand death struggle, fierce and merciless, and the rescuers won the battle and the long trail ended then and there with the rescue of the two girls and Overton and Ben.

But it was a battle never to be forgotten by those who were in the red scene.

And in the fight ended the life of Steve Hathaway, for he was found dead in the cavern.

"He served us well, Captain Meinhold—and we have avenged him," said Buffalo Bill, as he looked around him at the carnage wrought.

It was Buffalo Bill's victory, for he led the daring charge, and it was complete.

The robbers, asking no quarter, fought, but they fought without heart, and while few fell on the right side, the bad men were completely "wiped out."

When the light of another day shone on the earth men were busy clearing out the narrow road that led from the

cavern, but all of these men belonged to the command of the brave Meinhold, and were directed in the work the gallant Lieutenant Lawson.

Overton was now happy. He could talk to rescuers Lottie all that he wanted to.

Ben, too, was in what he termed "de seventh hebbin'." His young mistresses were free, and he had heard his old master was alive and getting well.

There was not a great deal of plunder in the place except in arms and horses, and these were indeed quite a capture.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I wish that Buffalo Bill was back," said the commanding officer at Fort McPherson. "The report is the Indians are thick between here and the Loup is agreeable. It seems to me that if they are not checked in time we'll have a general Indian war this summer. The red fiends are getting very bold, and should they make a raid upon the railroad the country would have a shudder which would make the Peace Commissioners rather popular."

While he was thus speaking to the post-adjutant an old man, pale and feeble, leaning on a staff, approached.

"Ah! Mr. Herbeson, I am glad to see you able to come out. We are looking with hope for the safe return of your daughters, for it is full time the command we have out reported."

"I have hoped till hope seems a mockery," said the man. "My sons are dead, and sometimes I wish also that I knew my daughters were dead also."

"Look! look, general!" said the adjutant. "No more but Buffalo Bill rides like that."

A man, with his long hair flowing out in the sun from his bare head, waving a big white hat in his hand, sitting on his horse as if he and the animal were one, came like the wind toward headquarters.

At the same moment a cheerful bugle call came from toward the Platte.

"Company 'B' is coming in!" cried the adjutant.

"What is the news?" cried the general, hastily, as the scout rode up, and before he dismounted.

"Victory, sir—victory over the worst band of robbers the country was ever cursed with; nearly three hundred horses captured; Red Leaf and his band, with Dove and I gone back to Spotted Tail's camp satisfied, and——"

"My daughters—you don't say a word about them," groaned Mr. Herbeson. "Are they dead?"

"They're alive and well," cried the scout.

"Quick! Lift him up! The old gentleman fainted!" cried the general.

He had fainted from sudden and excessive joy, not till his daughters were there in person to assist him fully come back to his senses and to a realization that there was yet happiness in store for him.

By this time the general was receiving the report of Captain Meinhold, who had done the country the good and efficient service of breaking up a dangerous band of desperadoes.

Mr. Herbeson gave up all idea of going to the West after he had enjoyed a little private conversation with his daughter Lottie and Eugene Overton.

THE END.

The next number will contain "Buffalo Bill's Last Shot," a story of Wild West adventure.



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